CYRANO DE BERGERAC

BY EDMOND ROSTAND

With Illustrations by
Sylvain Sauvage

CYRANO

DE BERGERAC

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AN HEROIC COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS : IN THE ENGLISH VERSION BY BRIAN HOOKER

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR AND WITH WATER-COLORS

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✣ IT WAS TO THE SOUL OF
CYRANO THAT I INTENDED
TO DEDICATE THIS POEM.
✣ BUT SINCE THAT SOUL
HAS BEEN REBORN IN YOU,
COQUELIN, IT IS TO YOU
THAT I DEDICATE IT. ✣ E.R.

THE PERSONS

✣

Cyrano de Bergerac	*The Porter*
Christian de Neuvillette	*A Citizen*
Comte de Guiche	*His Son*
Ragueneau	*A Cut-Purse*
Le Bret	*A Spectator*
Carbon de Castel-Jaloux	*A Sentry*
The Cadets	*Bertrandou the Fifer*
Lignière	*A Capuchin*
Vicomte de Valvert	*Two Musicians*
A Marquis	*The Poets*
Second Marquis	*The Pastrycooks*
Third Marquis	*The Pages*
Montfleury	Roxane
Bellerose	Her Duenna
Jodelet	Lise
Cuigy	The Orange-Girl
Brissaille	Mother Marguérite de Jésus
A Meddler	Sister Marthe
A Musketeer	Sister Claire
Another Musketeer	*An Actress*
A Spanish Officer	*A Soubrette*
A Cavalier	*The Flower-Girl*

The Crowd, Citizens, Marquis, Musketeers, Thieves, Pastrycooks, Cadets of Gascoyne, Poets, Actors, Violins, Pages, Children, Spanish Soldiers, Spectators, Intellectuals, Nuns, Academicians, etc.

THE ACTS

The first four Acts in 1640; *the fifth in* 1655.

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A Performance at the Hôtel de Bourgogne

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Cyrano's Gazette

INTRODUCTION

The Limited Editions Club has asked me to explain, by way of introduction, the special importance of this play. That should be interesting; because to explain *Cyrano de Bergerac* is simply to explain the Theatre. It is not only a great play; it is typically and peculiarly a great play; not only literary and dramatic, but triumphantly stagy and theatrical. Its artistry makes no concealment of art; it swaggers and parades the means and methods, the powers and limitations and devices of the Theatre, as its Gascon hero flaunts his own personality: with equal frankness and with equal charm. So it is more than any other I know a play for playwrights and playgoers and all whose enjoyment increases by understanding what they enjoy. Surely no sheer theatrics ever made a play so great; nor was ever a great play so obviously of the Theatre.

This was accomplished by a meeting of minds perhaps worth mentioning; for it may not be generally known. When Rostand had written already a few plays, all cleverly beautiful but of no outstanding success, Coquelin said to him: "I am a comedian, but I am a romantic actor first: I can read poetry, I can make love and fight and die. Make me a play of all these things." So the play was made, in how mutual and intimate collaboration the work itself is evidence. I do not know

how much they met nor who suggested this or that. But Coquelin was no poet outside of his own art, and Rostand wrote other plays as well but never planned one so successfully. Here were an exquisite and facile poet, and a veteran actor saturated with stagecraft; both lovers and masters of the flamboyant style and the *beau geste*. And the result was *Cyrano*.

Now a play is simply a story told in the Theatre: in action therefore and by actors then and there present to the audience: Not any story therefore; not *Paradise Lost*, nor *Anthony Adverse*, nor *The Little Mermaid;* but a story such as may be seen and heard, and of that story only such parts as being seen and heard imply the rest. The actors must act, the audience enjoy and understand; and the two hours' traffic of the stage must keep in line and keep on moving.

These are restrictions; and it is interesting to note how any art does its best work and gives its greatest pleasure by taking advantage of its restrictions and turning them to its peculiar use. Of course, all arts do something of this sort; that is what art is for. Of the three narrative arts, fiction shows life as consequence; the screen as continuity; the stage as crisis. Because we must play our story complete in a series of scenes, we select the high spots, the turning points; contrasts, comparisons, ironies: in a word, all that we vaguely and naturally call Dramatic. Whatever happens, we must hear and see; and because we so seem to hear and see the whole story actually happening (as in real life we never do), we realize life in the Theatre with a vividness and intensity beyond life itself. It is like looking through a lens: we see less; but we see it magnified.

So much for laying down the law; and now to follow out its application. We return to Rostand—and to Coquelin.

The story first; the story of a comic figure with romantic, even heroic possibilities; for he must speak poetry, and make love, and fight, and die. None better

than Cyrano de Bergerac, a swaggering Gascon with literary leanings who lived in the picturesque period of Mazarin. We do not know too much about his life, and that is well; we are the freer to imagine. He wrote *A Journey to the Moon*, and was notable for his enormous nose. Theatre at once. Look how the whole gorgeous character hangs on that feature like an orient pearl. A figure visually absurd making his virtue of absurdity, conscious and eloquent of both; one who may flaunt to admiration every adornment of his soul, and we shall love him because the humor of it will save the sentimental. What a part to play!

Well, such a fellow falls in love. What would the lady do? Love him—if he were only beautiful. Dramatize that: another character, Christian, the beautiful but dumb young rival. Good, the triangle. What happens—do they fight? No, better friends; sure fire—the noble old self-sacrifice; and not too trite; for Cyrano only sacrifices himself because he must. She could not love him unless he were invisible. Theatre again! The old balcony scene, with a new twist. She can see Christian and hear Cyrano. We can get away with that—with the lights. Now how to hold that situation. Why, Christian goes to war before the bridal night. Suspense, yes. Audiences like virginity. More suspense—Christian understands and is jealous. Before Roxane is told that Christian's love was Cyrano's love-making, Christian dies; and Cyrano will not take advantage. The point of honor; a weak point, but sympathetic and in character. We can make them believe that. Then for an end Roxane finds out that her love was for the soul of Cyrano. How to play that? He reads the love-letters in the dark, knowing them by heart because he wrote them. Since he has to die, he dies delirious, fighting phantoms, gloriously absurd, a new death-scene, the keynote. We have it; that will make a play: *Comedie Héroïque, en cinq actes, en vers!*

I wish I could go on throughout the play, examining in detail how things

are done; but that would expand this introduction into a book on playmaking. The most I can do is to show you what to look for, and by illustration where to look.

The persons first; and these not as "characters" but as active parts; such parts as actors love because audiences enjoy. Action means here not merely doing something, but doing something to the audience. It may be action merely to speak: "How can you read now? It is dark." It may be action to say and do noticeably nothing, as Christian is acting when he is brought in dead. For these are actions that a man might play. What the actor does not like is being unobserved or having that within which passeth show. He wants to make a show of himself, and quite right, too; that is why he is there; and so far as his assumed character gives him that, he cares not whether it be good or evil, pleasant or unpleasant, false to life or true. Nor do we. Look then, what Rostand does for his company. Cyrano is a great part, of course; but see how great. It is not only his range and contrast and versatility of behavior, like a dance under a spectrum of spotlights. It is that his very nature is theatrical; to wave emotion like a banner and thrust himself forward like a sword; yet with a grace and humour that takes off the curse. His own laugh follows the cheer and the tear so surely that we laugh with him and accept all three. In such a part the worst of actors must do something and the best find all that he can do. As for the others, look how the least of them affords that something to do which actor and audience agree to enjoy. The nun in the last act has her chance to be as charming as Roxane. The Duenna is as definite as Ragueneau, and for her moment as amusing. The cadet who is no more than introduced rejoices in the name of Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Saléchan de Castel-Crabioules. The Cardinal, who never speaks, dominates the whole scene upon his entrance. The page whose part is one meow gets the great

star to stop and bark at him. See also how carefully those parts which play opposite are pointed up by contrast: Christian and de Guiche with Cyrano; Ragueneau and Le Bret with him and with each other; Roxane with all.

The structure now of acts and scenes; chiefly scenes, for the act is optional, a matter of convenience and convention giving sense of form. We divide our play into acts; we build it up of scenes; and the scenes do the work and tell the story. Moreover, the limits and location of an act depend upon the essential scenes therein. So our last three acts are set already: the Balcony and the Camp, of course; and for the last, the Convent will be appropriate. The Second might be set in any place where the people might meet as requisite. But its mood of course is comedy; and its main point, the compact between Christian and Cyrano, approaches fantasy. So the fantastic setting in Ragueneau's poetical pastry shop makes mere romance comparatively credible. As for the first act, its business is the character of Cyrano: we must see that before we can go on; for seeing is believing. Plausible people like Christian and Roxane and de Guiche may develop throughout the story. But upon this fellow's extraordinary behavior, the whole story turns. So we display him in a public place doing preposterous things which presently appear coherent, and so credible. Then the story begins: "Porter, the doors!"

We shall see all this better by examining single scenes; for a play is organized of scenes as the organization of ships embodies the fleet. What makes a good scene? First and last, it moves: it finds the action here and leaves it there: something has happened. There are fine scenes in fiction like that New England byway of which one said: "It don't start nowheres, nor it don't arrive to nowheres else." But such scenes are always bad Theatre. Our audience wants action; wants it so much as to be credulous of anything they understand; especially at the be-

ginning, for the sake of the action they impatiently expect. Never argue with an audience. Never explain. All they want is to be shown; show them.

Now turn to a famous scene: the duel in Rhyme. Of course it could not happen—but who cares? It does happen; and see how much happens. Action, of course; but more than that: action which points the moral and adorns the tale. The Gascon has made good. A moment ago, he was no more than showing off; now he is a hero, and they on the stage and we in the house are all rooting for him as though he were Dizzy Dean. Something has happened to the audience. And more than that: even while we enjoy the exciting business and the showy acting, it strikes ringing the very keynote of Cyrano and of the play: *Quelle sottise—mais quelle geste!*

And still more: beside its quality of action, the scene has pace and form; the pace of the fight and the form of the Ballade. Pace in a play does not mean merely speed, any more than it does in racing; but speed varied and contrasted, speed to some purpose, speed intelligent. Mere hurry does not give the effect of pace, nor mere bustle about the stage the sense of action; these are cheap substitutes which easily become boresome. But see how fast the scene of Cyrano and the Busybody is played; faster than any one person could read the lines. See how the sudden pause, "And why not, if you please?" makes the part following seem faster still, although the actual lines are read more slowly; because we feel where it is going. See how the slow scene of Cyrano and Le Bret contrasts with what precedes and follows. Look how the last act never drags, because its slow movement is appropriate, and the suspense holds. That is what pace means. And by form I mean that sense of pattern in a scene evident to the audience; sometimes quite obvious as in the scene where Cyrano's "Yes, Roxane," repeats like a refrain; and the scene in the second act for the same people; and

again in Cyrano's narrative which Christian interrupts with allusions to his nose; more subtly in the scenes preceding and following this last, where the rhythm of speech and action make the scene play as an orchestra plays a piece of music. A good scene is like a play in miniature, with a shape and color and climax of its own.

There is another bit of stagecraft here worth noticing for its kindness to the actor whereby his pleasure subtly becomes our own. In the scene of the noses, Cyrano is of course feeding Christian; in the scene over Christian's body, Roxane is feeding Cyrano. Generally, no actor likes to feed another; especially when he himself is playing an important part. Now in these scenes the feeder is given all the fat lines, the vivid action, while the response rings changes upon one refrain. So they are both happy and so are we. It is not that one actor must give milk from which another skims the cream; rather, the one paints a whole gorgeous sunset opposite which the other stars himself. And as actors help one another to their best effects, so the one scene, however brilliant by itself, stands higher by the support of other scenes than it could stand alone. The scene of the roses depends entirely upon the preceding scene of Christian with the Cadets and upon Cyrano's promise to Roxane. Christian is warned and dared; Cyrano has promised to be his friend; and so the scene. Without these it is nothing.

This brings us to the matter of the Plant: so named in theatrical language, and well named; for the Plant blossoms and bears fruit in the Theatre as it does nowhere else. We "plant" in the mind of our audience this or that point of plot, situation, character, what you will; later we repeat or refer to the planted idea; and by some curious crowd-psychology the audience remembers and rejoices in the sheer connection of the known and the new. I suppose the way of it is this: we tell our story on the stage in sections, in a series of high spots; whereby our

audience, habituated to follow us by leaping mentally from crag to crag, does so rejoicing in its strength, discovering delightfully its own cleverness. The instinct for this is so strong that oftentimes mere repetition makes for comedy. The question whether anybody wants to buy a duck is for once no more than mildly amusing; but let the comedian repeat that innocent inquiry a few times and the crowd begins to rock and roar. And even you and I among that crowd are as susceptible as the rest.

And the spell holds alike from the low comic to the highest Tragedy. Think of great tragic lines, how they are nothing in themselves but terrible in their retrospection. — "Pray you, undo this button." — "I did not know the dead could have such hair." — "Mother, give me the sun." — "The rest is silence." So in *Cyrano*, and so most obviously and often. The Balcony Scene taken alone is merely poetry. But look at what precedes. First the nose carefully made absurd, pathetic, fearfully unmentionable. Whereupon Christian mentions it. Then the pact and the love-letters. Now we actually show Christian attempting to make love for himself; so that we like him and laugh at him and begin to believe in Roxane's longing for amorous eloquence. And then and not till then the scene: its wild improbability made credible, its comedy touched with tears, and its poetry made palatable to common sense by what has gone before. So the Moon scene would be entirely boresome, but that we know Christian and Roxane are being married meanwhile. So with Roxane in the fourth act, raving to Christian of the love-letters — because we know that Christian knows that Cyrano wrote them. So in this play almost everywhere.

Consider especially the planting for Cyrano's entrance in the last act. Once a week he comes most carefully upon his hour to amuse and merely to amuse Roxane. He is poor and hungry. His nose looks like old ivory. He has one coat

left—his old one. He has dangerous enemies; an accident may happen to him. It has happened. He lies abed, his skull broken. The doctor who attended him for charity says that if he tries to raise his head he may die. So on the last stroke of the hour, he walks in. "After fourteen years—late for the first time." The plant here is so patent in its mechanism, so frankly trite in its material of pathos and suspense, as to lie well within the realm of Hokum; a region where playwrights and audiences rush in with mutual pleasure, where critics if not angels fear to tread. Hokum we may define as any trite and true device to arouse emotion which still affects us as intended, though we remember it a thousand times; and I will here make bold to defend it and to boast that you and I enjoy it still, despite the dear silver which shines in its hair—and now and then because of that. For after all, the trick could never have become trite if it had not been true. The grass is green and the sky blue, in the maugre of the teeth of modernists; and love is only an old scene with a new twist, and death, as Queen Gertrude originally observes, is common. And if anyone feels that I blaspheme the holiness of Art or tarnish the gold upon the gingerbread by displaying thus the manner of its making, I can assure her upon some experience of artists that they generally keep their souls to themselves and work as workmen. Art is like that because life is like that; and there is no more incongruity between its sacred ends and its necessary means than between Motherhood and diapers.

Finally as to the dialogue. In the period of the "well-made" problem play, it used to be said that plays were made, not written: that, given the precise action of the scene, the so-called "substance" of the speech, mere writing did not matter. Certainly nothing could be more absurd; for to say a thing otherwise is simply to say another thing; and because speech is action in the Theatre, there cannot be except in critical abstraction any divorce between the two. For prac-

tical proof, one need no more than glance at Shakespeare—who wrote supremely, but outside of mere narrative contrast and continuity quite seldom troubled to construct at all. Of course the truth is that sheer dialogue is as important as all the rest of stagecraft put together, since it implies and puts together all the rest. Compare play and pantomime, the silent with the speaking picture; or see a play you do not know in a language you do not understand.

And here also I can no more than illustrate. Look at the opening lines: how instantly the story moves, how many things are told in how few words. Run on through a few scenes, and see, by the continual pressure put upon you to visualize as you read, how speech is also action. Trace this quality through the turning points, the climaxes, the conclusions, of those scenes which we have already analyzed. Notice the longer speeches, the *tirades;* how each does more than give the actor a bravura passage because it is more than merely talking. The nose speech in Act I makes the scene by very exuberance of iteration. The "No Thank You" speech in Act II rolls up character and situation like a growing snowball. The contrasted styles of Cyrano and Christian are of the very essence of the play. The sheer poetry of the Balcony scene dramatizes its emotion.

Of course in all this literary phase we are seeing darkly through the glass of a translation. And to admit that is not modesty but merely truism. I know how steadily I concentrated upon theatric value; trying to follow Rostand's action scene by scene and line by line, sacrificing to that all else—and how much else! Like Ragueneau, I love a friendly audience, and am as pleased when they enjoy my cooking. But my failures are a wide open secret among all of us who care for the original. The closing lines, for instance, I fumbled abominably for want of a connotative equivalent for *panache.* The Triolets I did not really translate at all. There is a bark and growl, a sense of drums and tramplings in the very

sound and rhythm of the French which I could no more achieve in English than I could make onion do for garlic:

"Oeil d'aigle, jambe de cigogne,
Moustache de chat, dents de loups,
Fendant la canaille qui grogne—
Oeil d'aigle, jambe de cigogne—
Ils vont—coiffés d'un vieux vigogne
Dont la plume cache les trous! . .
Oeil d'aigle, jambe de cigogne,
Moustache de chat, dents de loups."

I gave it up. I sat me down and wrote a good colorless resonant piece of declamation to serve the purpose of the scene and let it go at that. Not Rostand; not Coquelin; but I know it!.

And in farewell, may I for sheer pleasure quote one passage more, which I defy anybody to translate:

"—Un danger
Mortel sans le vouloir, exquis sans y songer,
Une piège de nature, une rose muscade
Dans laquelle l'amour se tint en embuscade!
Qui connait son sourire a connu le parfait.
Elle fait de la grace avec rien, elle fait
Tenir tout le divin dans un geste quelconque.
Et tu ne saurais pas, Venus, monter en conque
Ni toi, Diane, marcher dans les grands bois fleuris
Comme elle monte en chaise et marche dans Paris!"

August, 1935. BRIAN HOOKER

CYRANO

DE BERGERAC

THE FIRST ACT

A PERFORMANCE AT THE HÔTEL DE BOURGOGNE

THE *Hall of the Hôtel de Bourgogne in* 1640. *A sort of Tennis Court, arranged and decorated for Theatrical productions.*

The Hall is a long rectangle; we see it diagonally, in such a way that one side of it forms the back scene, which begins at the First Entrance on the Right and runs up to the Last Entrance on the Left, where it makes a right angle with the Stage which is seen obliquely.

This Stage is provided on either hand with benches placed along the wings. The curtain is formed by two lengths of Tapestry which can be drawn apart. Above a Harlequin cloak, the Royal Arms. Broad steps lead from the Stage down to the floor of the Hall. On either side of these steps, a place for the Musicians. A row of candles serving as footlights. Two tiers of Galleries along the side of the Hall; the upper one divided into boxes.

There are no seats upon the Floor, which is the actual stage of our theatre; but toward the back of the Hall, on the right, a few benches are arranged; and underneath a stairway on the extreme right, which leads up to the galleries, and of which only the lower portion is visible, there is a sort of Sideboard, decorated with little tapers, vases of flowers, bottles and glasses, plates of cake, et cetera.

Farther along, toward the centre of our stage is the Entrance to the Hall: a great double door which opens only slightly to admit the Audience. On one of the panels of this door, as also in other places about the Hall, and in particular just over the Sideboard, are Playbills in red, upon which we may read the title LA CLORISE.

As the CURTAIN RISES, *the Hall is dimly lighted and still empty. The Chandeliers are lowered to the floor, in the middle of the Hall, ready for lighting.*

(Sound of voices outside the door. Then a Cavalier enters abruptly.)

THE PORTER *(Follows him)* Halloa there!—Fifteen sols!

THE CAVALIER I enter free.

THE PORTER Why?

THE CAVALIER Soldier of the Household of the King!

THE PORTER *(Turns to another Cavalier who has just entered)* You?

SECOND CAVALIER I pay nothing.

THE PORTER Why not?

SECOND CAVALIER Musketeer!

FIRST CAVALIER *(To the Second)* The play begins at two. Plenty of time—
And here's the whole floor empty. Shall we try
Our exercise? *(They fence with the foils which they have brought)*

A LACKEY *(Enters)* —Pst!...Flanquin!...

ANOTHER *(Already on stage)* What, Champagne?

FIRST LACKEY *(Showing games which he takes out of his doublet)*

Cards. Dice. Come on. *(Sits on the floor)*

SECOND LACKEY *(Same action)* Come on, old cock!

FIRST LACKEY *(Takes from his pocket a bit of candle, lights it, sets it on the floor)*

I have stolen

A little of my master's fire.

A GUARDSMAN *(To a flower girl who comes forward)* How sweet

Of you, to come before they light the hall! *(Puts his arm around her)*

FIRST CAVALIER *(Receives a thrust of the foil)* A hit!

SECOND LACKEY A club!

THE GUARDSMAN *(Pursuing the girl)* A kiss!

THE FLOWER GIRL *(Pushing away from him)* They'll see us!—

THE GUARDSMAN *(Draws her into a dark corner)* No danger!

A MAN *(Sits on the floor, together with several others who have brought packages of food)*

When we come early, we have time to eat.

A CITIZEN *(Escorting his son, a boy of sixteen)* Sit here, my son.

FIRST LACKEY Mark the Ace!

ANOTHER MAN *(Draws a bottle from under his cloak and sits down with the others)*

Here's the spot

For a jolly old sot to suck his Burgundy— *(Drinks)*

Here—in the house of the Burgundians!

THE CITIZEN *(To his son)* Would you not think you were in some den of vice?

(Points with his cane at the drunkard) Drunkards—

(In stepping back, one of the cavaliers trips him up) Bullies!

(He falls between the lackeys) Gamblers!—

THE GUARDSMAN *(Behind him as he rises, still struggling with the Flower Girl)*

One kiss—

THE CITIZEN Good God!— *(Draws his son quickly away)*
Here!—And to think, my son, that in this hall
They play Rotrou!

THE BOY Yes father—and Corneille!

THE PAGES *(Dance in, holding hands and singing)* Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-lère . . .

THE PORTER You pages there—no nonsense!

FIRST PAGE *(With wounded dignity)* Oh, monsieur!
Really! How could you? *(To the Second, the moment the Porter turns his back)*
Pst!—a bit of string?

SECOND PAGE *(Shows fishline with hook)* Yes—and a hook.

FIRST PAGE Up in the gallery,
And fish for wigs!

A CUT-PURSE *(Gathers around him several evil-looking young fellows)*
Now then, you picaroons,
Perk up, and hear me mutter. Here's your bout—
Bustle around some cull, and bite his bung . . .

SECOND PAGE *(Calls to other pages already in the gallery)*
Hey! Brought your pea-shooters?

THIRD PAGE *(From above)* And our peas, too! *(Blows, and showers them with peas)*

THE BOY What is the play this afternoon?

THE CITIZEN *Clorise.*

THE BOY Who wrote that?

THE CITIZEN Balthasar Baro. What a play! . . . *(He takes the Boy's arm and leads him upstage)*

THE CUT-PURSE *(To his pupils)* Lace now, on those long sleeves, you cut it off—
(Gesture with thumb and finger, as if using scissors)

A Spectator *(To another, pointing upward toward the gallery)*
Ah, *Le Cid!*—Yes, the first night, I sat there—
The Cut-Purse Watches— *(Gesture as of picking a pocket)*
The Citizen *(Coming down with his son)* Great actors we shall see to-day—
The Cut-Purse Handkerchiefs— *(Gesture of holding the pocket with left hand, and drawing out handkerchief with right)*
The Citizen Montfleury—
A Voice *(In the gallery)* Lights! Light the lights!
The Citizen Bellerose, l'Épy, Beaupré, Jodelet—
A Page *(On the floor)* Here comes the orange-girl.
The Orange Girl Oranges, milk,
Raspberry syrup, lemonade— *(Noise at the door)*
A Falsetto Voice *(Outside)* Make way, brutes!
First Lackey What, the Marquis—on the floor? *(The Marquis enter in a little group)*
Second Lackey Not long—
Only a few moments; they'll go and sit
On the stage presently.
First Marquis *(Seeing the hall half empty)* How now! We enter
Like tradespeople—no crowding, no disturbance!—
No treading on the toes of citizens?
Oh fie! Oh fie! *(He encounters two gentlemen who have already arrived)*
Cuigy! Brissaille! *(Great embracings)*
Cuigy The faithful! *(Looks around him)* We are here before the candles.
First Marquis Ah, be still!
You put me in a temper.

SECOND MARQUIS Console yourself,
Marquis—The lamplighter!
THE CROWD *(Applauding the appearance of the lamplighter)* Ah! . . .

(A group gathers around the chandelier while he lights it. A few people have already taken their place in the gallery. Lignière enters the hall, arm in arm with Christian de Neuvillette. Lignière is a slightly disheveled figure, dissipated and yet distinguished looking. Christian, elegantly but rather unfashionably dressed, appears preoccupied and keeps looking up at the boxes.)

CUIGY Lignière!—
BRISSAILLE *(Laughing)* Still sober—at this hour?
LIGNIÈRE *(To Christian)* May I present you? *(Christian assents)*
Baron Christian de Neuvillette. *(They salute)*
THE CROWD *(Applauding as the lighted chandelier is hoisted into place)* Ah!—
CUIGY *(Aside to Brissaille, looking at Christian)* Rather
A fine head, is it not? The profile . . .
FIRST MARQUIS *(Who has overheard)* Peuh!
LIGNIÈRE *(Presenting them to Christian)* Messieurs de Cuigy . . . de Brissaille . . .
CHRISTIAN *(Bows)* Enchanted!
FIRST MARQUIS *(To the second)* He is not ill-looking; possibly a shade
Behind the fashion.
LIGNIÈRE *(To Cuigy)* Monsieur is recently
From the Touraine.
CHRISTIAN Yes, I have been in Paris
Two or three weeks only. I join the Guards
Tomorrow.

FIRST MARQUIS *(Watching the people who come into the boxes)*
Look—Madame la Présidente
Aubry!

THE ORANGE GIRL Oranges, milk—

THE VIOLINS *(Tuning up)* La . . . la . . .

CUIGY *(To Christian, calling his attention to the increasing crowd)* We have
An audience to-day!

CHRISTIAN A brilliant one.

FIRST MARQUIS Oh yes, all our own people—the gay world! *(They name the ladies who enter the boxes elaborately dressed. Bows and smiles are exchanged)*

SECOND MARQUIS Madame de Guéméné . . .

CUIGY De Bois-Dauphin . . .

FIRST MARQUIS Whom we adore—

BRISSAILLE Madame de Chavigny . . .

SECOND MARQUIS Who plays with all our hearts—

LIGNIÈRE Why, there's Corneille
Returned from Rouen!

THE BOY *(To his father)* Are the Academy
All here?

THE CITIZEN I see some of them . . . there's Boudu—
Boissat—Cureau—Porchères—Colomby—
Bourzeys—Bourdon—Arbaut—
Ah, those great names,
Never to be forgotten!

FIRST MARQUIS Look—at last!
Our Intellectuals! Barthénoïde,

Urimédonte, Félixérie . . .

SECOND MARQUIS *(Languishing)* Sweet heaven!
How exquisite their surnames are! Marquis,
You know them all?

FIRST MARQUIS I know them all, Marquis!

LIGNIÈRE *(Draws Christian aside)* My dear boy, I came here to serve you—Well,
But where's the lady? I'll be going.

CHRISTIAN Not yet—
A little longer! She is always here.
Please! I must find some way of meeting her.
I am dying of love! And you—you know
Everyone, the whole court and the whole town,
And put them all into your songs—at least
You can tell me her name!

THE FIRST VIOLIN *(Raps on his desk with his bow)* Pst— Gentlemen! *(Raises his bow)*

THE ORANGE GIRL Macaroons, lemonade—

CHRISTIAN Then she may be
One of those æsthetes . . . Intellectuals,
You call them— How can I talk to a woman
In that style? I have no wit. This fine manner
Of speaking and of writing nowadays—
Not for me! I am a soldier—and afraid.
That's her box, on the right—the empty one.

LIGNIÈRE *(Starts for the door)* I am going.

CHRISTIAN *(Restrains him)* No—wait!

LIGNIÈRE Not I. There's a tavern
Not far away—and I am dying of thirst.

THE ORANGE GIRL *(Passes with her tray)* Orange juice?

LIGNIÈRE No!

THE ORANGE GIRL Milk?

LIGNIÈRE Pouah!

THE ORANGE GIRL Muscatel?

LIGNIÈRE Here! Stop! *(To Christian)* I'll stay a little. *(To the Girl)*
Let me see
Your Muscatel. *(He sits down by the sideboard. The Girl pours out wine for him)*

VOICES *(In the crowd about the door, upon the entrance of a spruce little man, rather fat, with a beaming smile)* Ragueneau!

LIGNIÈRE *(To Christian)* Ragueneau,
Poet and pastry-cook—a character!

RAGUENEAU *(Dressed like a confectioner in his Sunday clothes, advances quickly to Lignière)* Sir, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano?

LIGNIÈRE *(Presents him to Christian)* Permit me . . . Ragueneau, confectioner,
The chief support of modern poetry.

RAGUENEAU *(Bridling)* Oh—too much honor!

LIGNIÈRE Patron of the Arts—
Mæcenas! Yes you are—

RAGUENEAU Undoubtedly,
The poets gather round my hearth.

LIGNIÈRE On credit—
Himself a poet—

RAGUENEAU So they say—

LIGNIÈRE Maintains
The Muses.
RAGUENEAU It is true that for an ode—
LIGNIÈRE You give a tart—
RAGUENEAU A tartlet—
LIGNIÈRE Modesty!
And for a triolet you give—
RAGUENEAU Plain bread.
LIGNIÈRE *(Severely)* Bread and milk! And you love the theatre?
RAGUENEAU I adore it!
LIGNIÈRE Well, pastry pays for all.
Your place to-day now—Come, between ourselves,
What did it cost you?
RAGUENEAU Four pies; fourteen cakes. *(Looking about)*
But— Cyrano not here? Astonishing!
LIGNIÈRE Why so?
RAGUENEAU Why— Montfleury plays!
LIGNIÈRE Yes, I hear
That hippopotamus assumes the rôle
Of Phédon. What is that to Cyrano?
RAGUENEAU Have you not heard? Monsieur de Bergerac
So hates Montfleury, he has forbidden him
For three weeks to appear upon the stage.
LIGNIÈRE *(Who is, by this time, at his fourth glass)* Well?
RAGUENEAU Montfleury plays!—
CUIGY *(Strolls over to them)* Yes—what then?

RAGUENEAU Ah! That
Is what I came to see.

FIRST MARQUIS This Cyrano—
Who is he?

CUIGY Oh, he is the lad with the long sword.

SECOND MARQUIS Noble?

CUIGY Sufficiently; he is in the Guards. *(Points to a gentleman who comes and goes about the hall as though seeking for someone)* His friend Le Bret can tell you more. *(Calls to him)* Le Bret! *(Le Bret comes down to them)* Looking for Bergerac?

LE BRET Yes. And for trouble.

CUIGY Is he not an extraordinary man?

LE BRET The best friend and the bravest soul alive!

RAGUENEAU Poet—

CUIGY Swordsman—

LE BRET Musician—

BRISSAILLE Philosopher—

LIGNIÈRE Such a remarkable appearance, too!

RAGUENEAU Truly, I should not look to find his portrait
By the grave hand of Philippe de Champagne.
He might have been a model for Callot—
One of those wild swashbucklers in a masque—
Hat with three plumes, and doublet with six points—
His cloak behind him over his long sword
Cocked, like the tail of strutting Chanticleer—
Prouder than all the swaggering Tamburlaines
Hatched out of Gascony. And to complete

This Punchinello figure—such a nose!—
My lords, there is no such nose as that nose—
You cannot look upon it without crying: "Oh no,
Impossible! Exaggerated!" Then
You smile, and say: "Of course— I might have known;
Presently he will take it off." But that
Monsieur de Bergerac will never do.

LIGNIÈRE *(Grimly)* He keeps it—and God help the man who smiles!

RAGUENEAU His sword is one half of the shears of Fate!

FIRST MARQUIS *(Shrugs)* He will not come.

RAGUENEAU Will he not? Sir, I'll lay you
A pullet à la Ragueneau!

FIRST MARQUIS *(Laughing)* Done!

(Murmurs of admiration; Roxane has just appeared in her box. She sits at the front of the box, and her Duenna takes a seat toward the rear. Christian, busy paying the Orange Girl, does not see her at first.)

SECOND MARQUIS *(With little excited cries)* Ah!
Oh! Oh! Sweet sirs, look yonder! Is she not
Frightfully ravishing?

FIRST MARQUIS Bloom of the peach—
Blush of the strawberry—

SECOND MARQUIS So fresh—so cool,
That our hearts, grown all warm with loving her,
May catch their death of cold!

CHRISTIAN *(Looks up, sees Roxane, and seizes Lignière by the arm)*

There! Quick—up there—

In the box! Look!—

LIGNIÈRE *(Coolly)* Herself?

CHRISTIAN Quickly— Her name?

LIGNIÈRE *(Sipping his wine, and speaking between sips)*

Magdeleine Robin, called Roxane . . . refined . . .

Intellectual . . .

CHRISTIAN Ah!—

LIGNIÈRE Unmarried . . .

CHRISTIAN Oh!—

LIGNIÈRE No title . . . rich enough . . . an orphan . . . cousin

To Cyrano . . . of whom we spoke just now . . .

(At this point, a very distinguished looking gentleman, the Cordon Bleu around his neck, enters the box, and stands a moment talking with Roxane.)

CHRISTIAN *(Starts)* And the man? . . .

LIGNIÈRE *(Beginning to feel his wine a little; cocks his eye at them)*

Oho! That man? . . . Comte de Guiche . . .

In love with her . . . married himself, however,

To the niece of the Cardinal—Richelieu . . .

Wishes Roxane, therefore, to marry one

Monsieur de Valvert . . . Vicomte . . . friend of his . . .

A somewhat melancholy gentleman . . .

But . . . well, accommodating! . . . She says No . . .

Nevertheless, de Guiche is powerful . . .

Not above persecuting . . . *(He rises, swaying a little, and very happy)*
I have written
A little song about his little game . . .
Good little song, too . . . Here, I'll sing it for you . . .
Make de Guiche furious . . . naughty little song . . .
Not so bad, either— Listen! . . . *(He stands with his glass held aloft, ready to sing)*

CHRISTIAN No. Adieu.

LIGNIÈRE Whither away?

CHRISTIAN To Monsieur de Valvert!

LIGNIÈRE Careful! The man's a swordsman . . . *(Nods toward Roxane, who is watching Christian)* Wait! Someone
Looking at you—

CHRISTIAN Roxane! . . . *(He forgets everything, and stands spellbound, gazing toward Roxane. The Cut-Purse and his crew, observing him transfixed, his eyes raised and his mouth half open, begin edging in his direction)*

LIGNIÈRE Oh! Very well,
Then I'll be leaving you . . . Good day . . . Good day! . . . *(Christian remains motionless)* Everywhere else, they like to hear me sing!—
Also I am thirsty. *(He goes out, navigating carefully. Le Bret, having made the circuit of the hall, returns to Ragueneau, somewhat reassured)*

LE BRET No sign anywhere
Of Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU *(Incredulous)* Wait and see!

LE BRET Humph! I hope
He has not seen the bill.

THE CROWD The play!—The play!—

FIRST MARQUIS *(Observing De Guiche, as he descends from Roxane's box and crosses the floor, followed by a knot of obsequious gentlemen, the Vicomte de Valvert among them)*
This man de Guiche—what ostentation!

SECOND MARQUIS Bah!—
Another Gascon!

FIRST MARQUIS Gascon, yes—but cold
And calculating—certain to succeed—
My word for it. Come, shall we make our bow?
We shall be none the worse, I promise you . . . *(They go toward De Guiche)*

SECOND MARQUIS Beautiful ribbons, Count! That color, now,
What is it—*Kiss-me-Dear* or *Startled-Fawn?*

DE GUICHE I call that shade *The Dying Spaniard.*

FIRST MARQUIS Ha!
And no false colors either—thanks to you
And your brave troops, in Flanders before long
The Spaniard will die daily.

DE GUICHE Shall we go
And sit upon the stage? Come, Valvert.

CHRISTIAN *(Starts at the name)* Valvert!—
The Vicomte—Ah, that scoundrel! Quick—my glove—
I'll throw it in his face— *(Reaching into his pocket for his glove, he catches the hand of the Cut-Purse)*

THE CUT-PURSE Oh!—

CHRISTIAN *(Holding fast to the man's wrist)* Who are you?
I was looking for my glove—

THE CUT-PURSE *(Cringing)* You found a hand. *(Hurriedly)*
Let me go—I can tell you something—

CHRISTIAN *(Still holding him)* Well?

THE CUT-PURSE Lignière—that friend of yours—

CHRISTIAN *(Same business)* Well?

THE CUT-PURSE Good as dead—
Understand? Ambuscaded. Wrote a song
About—no matter. There's a hundred men
Waiting for him to-night—I'm one of them.

CHRISTIAN A hundred! Who arranged this?

THE CUT-PURSE Secret.

CHRISTIAN Oh!

THE CUT-PURSE *(With dignity)* Professional secret.

CHRISTIAN Where are they to be?

THE CUT-PURSE Porte de Nesle. On his way home. Tell him so.
Save his life.

CHRISTIAN *(Releases the man)* Yes, but where am I to find him?

THE CUT-PURSE Go round the taverns. There's the Golden Grape,
The Pineapple, The Bursting Belt, the Two
Torches, The Three Funnels—in every one
You leave a line of writing—understand?
To warn him.

CHRISTIAN *(Starts for the door)* I'll go! God, what swine—a hundred
Against one man! *(Stops and looks longingly at Roxane)* Leave *her* here!—
(Savagely, turning toward Valvert) And leave *him!*—
(Decidedly) I must save Lignière! *(Exit)*

(De Guiche, Valvert, and all the Marquis have disappeared through the curtains, to take their seats upon the stage. The floor is entirely filled; not a vacant seat remains in the gallery or in the boxes.)

THE CROWD The play! The play!
Begin the play!

A CITIZEN *(As his wig is hoisted into the air on the end of a fishline, in the hands of a page in the gallery)* My wig!!

CRIES OF JOY He's bald! Bravo,
You pages! Ha ha ha!

THE CITIZEN *(Furious, shakes his fist at the boy)* Here, you young villain!

CRIES AND LAUGHTER *(Beginning very loud, then suddenly repressed)* HA HA!
Ha Ha! ha ha . . . *(Complete silence)*

LE BRET *(Surprised)* That sudden hush? . . . *(A Spectator whispers in his ear)*
Yes?

THE SPECTATOR I was told on good authority . . .

MURMURS *(Here and there)* What? . . . Here? . . . No . . . Yes . . . Look—in the latticed box—
The Cardinal! . . . The Cardinal! . . .

A PAGE The Devil!—
Now we shall all have to behave ourselves! *(Three raps on the stage. The audience becomes motionless. Silence)*

THE VOICE OF A MARQUIS *(From the stage, behind the curtains)* Snuff that candle!

ANOTHER MARQUIS *(Puts his head out through the curtains)* A chair! . . . *(A chair is passed from hand to hand over the heads of the crowd. He takes it, and disappears behind the curtains, not without having blown a few kisses to the occupants of the boxes.)*

A Spectator Silence!

Voices Hssh! . . . Hssh! . . .

(Again the three raps on the stage. The curtains part. Tableau. *The Marquis seated on their chairs to right and left of the stage, insolently posed. Back drop representing a pastoral scene, bluish in tone. Four little crystal chandeliers light up the stage. The violins play softly)*

Le Bret *(In a low tone, to Ragueneau)* Montfleury enters now?

Ragueneau *(Nods)* Opens the play.

Le Bret *(Much relieved)* Then Cyrano is not here!

Ragueneau I lose . . .

Le Bret Humph!—
So much the better!

(The melody of a Musette is heard. Montfleury appears upon the scene, a ponderous figure in the costume of a rustic shepherd, a hat garlanded with roses tilted over one ear, playing upon a beribboned pastoral pipe.)

The Crowd *(Applauds)* Montfleury! . . . Bravo! . . .

Montfleury *(After bowing to the applause, begins the rôle of Phédon)*
"Thrice happy he who hides from pomp and power
In sylvan shade or solitary bower;
Where balmy zephyrs fan his burning cheeks—"

A Voice *(From the midst of the hall)* Wretch! Have I not forbade you these three weeks? *(Sensation. Every one turns to look. Murmurs)*

Several Voices What? . . . Where? . . . Who is it? . . .

CUIGY Cyrano!

LE BRET *(In alarm)* Himself!

THE VOICE King of clowns! Leave the stage—*at once!*

THE CROWD Oh!—

MONTFLEURY Now,

Now, now—

THE VOICE You disobey me?

SEVERAL VOICES *(From the floor, from the boxes)* Hsh! Go on—

Quiet!—Go on, Montfleury!—Who's afraid?—

MONTFLEURY *(In a voice of no great assurance)*

"Thrice happy he who hides from . . ."

THE VOICE *(More menacingly)* Well? Well? Well? . . .

Monarch of mountebanks! Must I come and plant

A forest on your shoulders? *(A cane at the end of a long arm shakes above the heads of the crowd)*

MONTFLEURY *(In a voice increasingly feeble)* *"Thrice hap—"* *(The cane is violently agitated)*

THE VOICE *GO!!!*

THE CROWD Ah! . . .

CYRANO *(Arises in the centre of the floor, erect upon a chair, his arms folded, his hat cocked ferociously, his moustache bristling, his nose terrible)* Presently I shall grow angry! *(Sensation at his appearance)*

MONTFLEURY *(To the Marquis)* Messieurs,

If you protect me—

A MARQUIS *(Nonchalantly)* Well—proceed!

CYRANO Fat swine!

If you dare breathe one balmy zephyr more,
I'll fan your cheeks for you!

THE MARQUIS Quiet down there!

CYRANO Unless these gentlemen retain their seats,
My cane may bite their ribbons!

ALL THE MARQUIS *(On their feet)* That will do!—
Montfleury—

CYRANO Fly, goose! Shoo! Take to your wings,
Before I pluck your plumes, and draw your gorge!

A VOICE See here!—

CYRANO Off stage!!

ANOTHER VOICE One moment—

CYRANO What—still there? *(Turns back his cuffs deliberately)*
Very good—then I enter—*Left—with knife—*
To carve this large Italian sausage.

MONTFLEURY *(Desperately attempting dignity)* Sir,
When you insult me, you insult the Muse!

CYRANO *(With great politeness)* Sir, if the Muse, who never knew your name,
Had the honor to meet you—then be sure
That after one glance at that face of yours,
That figure of a mortuary urn—
She would apply her buskin—toward the rear!

THE CROWD Montfleury! . . . Montfleury! . . . The play! The play!

CYRANO *(To those who are shouting and crowding about him)*
Pray you, be gentle with my scabbard here—
She'll put her tongue out at you presently!— *(The circle enlarges)*

THE CROWD *(Recoiling)* Keep back—

CYRANO *(To Montfleury)* Begone!

THE CROWD *(Pushing in closer, and growling)* Ahr! . . . ahr! . . .

CYRANO *(Turns upon them)* Did someone speak? *(They recoil again.)*

A VOICE *(In the back of the hall, sings)*

Monsieur de Cyrano
Must be another Cæsar—
Let Brutus lay him low,
And play us La Clorise!

ALL THE CROWD *(Singing)* *La Clorise! La Clorise!*

CYRANO Let me hear one more word of that same song,
And I destroy you all!

A CITIZEN Who might you be?
Samson?—

CYRANO Precisely. Would you kindly lend me
Your jawbone?

A LADY *(In one of the boxes)* What an outrage!

A NOBLE Scandalous!

A CITIZEN Annoying!

A PAGE What a game!

THE CROWD Kss! Montfleury!
Cyrano!

CYRANO Silence!

THE CROWD *(Delirious)* Woof! Woof! Baaa! Cockadoo!

CYRANO I—

A PAGE Meow!

CYRANO I say be silent! — *(His voice dominates the uproar. Momentary hush)*
And I offer
One universal challenge to you all!
Approach, young heroes — I will take your names.
Each in his turn — no crowding! One, two, three —
Come, get your numbers — who will head the list —
You sir? No — You? Ah, no. To the first man
Who falls I'll build a monument! . . . Not one?
Will all who wish to die, please raise their hands? . . .
I see. You are so modest, you might blush
Before a sword naked. Sweet innocence! . . .
Not one name? Not one finger? . . . Very well,
Then I go on: *(Turning back towards the stage, where Montfleury waits in despair)*
I'd have our theatre cured
Of this carbuncle. Or if not, why then — *(His hand on his sword hilt)*
The lancet!

MONTFLEURY I —

CYRANO *(Descends from his chair, seats himself comfortably in the centre of the circle which has formed around him, and makes himself quite at home)* Attend to me — full moon!
I clap my hands, three times — thus. At the third
You will eclipse yourself.

THE CROWD *(Amused)* Ah!

CYRANO Ready? *One.*

MONTFLEURY I —

A VOICE *(From the boxes)* No!

THE CROWD He'll go— He'll stay—

MONTFLEURY I really think,

Gentlemen—

CYRANO *Two.*

MONTFLEURY Perhaps I had better—

CYRANO *Three! (Montfleury disappears, as if through a trapdoor. Tempest of laughter, hoots and hisses)*

THE CROWD Yah!—Coward— Come back—

CYRANO *(Beaming, drops back in his chair and crosses his legs)* Let him—if he dare!

A CITIZEN The Manager! Speech! Speech! *(Bellerose advances and bows)*

THE BOXES Ah! Bellerose!

BELLEROSE *(With elegance)* Most noble—most fair—

THE CROWD No! The Comedian—

Jodelet!—

JODELET *(Advances, and speaks through his nose)* Lewd fellows of the baser sort—

THE CROWD Ha! Ha! Not bad! Bravo!

JODELET No Bravos here!

Our heavy tragedian with the voluptuous bust

Was taken suddenly—

THE CROWD Yah! Coward!

JODELET I mean . . .

He had to be excused—

THE CROWD Call him back— No!—

Yes!—

THE BOY *(To Cyrano)* After all, Monsieur, what reason have you

To hate this Montfleury?

CYRANO *(Graciously, still seated)* My dear young man,
I have two reasons, either one alone
Conclusive. *Primo:* A lamentable actor,
Who mouths his verse and moans his tragedy,
And heaves up— Ugh!—like a hod-carrier, lines
That ought to soar on their own wings. *Secundo:*—
Well—that's my secret.

THE OLD CITIZEN *(Behind him)* But you close the play—
La Clorise—by Baro! Are we to miss
Our entertainment, merely—

CYRANO *(Respectfully, turns his chair toward the old man)* My dear old boy,
The poetry of Baro being worth
Zero, or less, I feel that I have done
Poetic justice!

THE INTELLECTUALS *(In the boxes)* Really!—our Baro!—
My dear!—Who ever?—Ah, dieu! The idea!—

CYRANO *(Gallantly, turns his chair toward the boxes)*
Fair ladies—shine upon us like the sun,
Blossom like flowers around us—be our songs,
Heard in a dream— Make sweet the hour of death,
Smiling upon us as you close our eyes—
Inspire, but do not try to criticise!

BELLEROSE Quite so!—and the mere money—possibly
You would like that returned— Yes?

CYRANO Bellerose,
You speak the first word of intelligence!

I will not wound the mantle of the Muse—
Here, catch!— *(Throws him a purse)* And hold your tongue.

THE CROWD *(Astonished)* Ah! Ah!

JODELET *(Deftly catches the purse, weighs it in his hand)* Monsieur,
You are hereby authorized to close our play
Every night, on the same terms.

THE CROWD Boo!

JODELET And welcome!
Let us be booed together, you and I!

BELLEROSE Kindly pass out quietly . . .

JODELET *(Burlesquing Bellerose)* Quietly . . .

(They begin to go out, while Cyrano looks about him with satisfaction. But the exodus ceases presently during the ensuing scene. The ladies in the boxes who have already risen and put on their wraps, stop to listen, and finally sit down again.)

LE BRET *(To Cyrano)* Idiot!

A MEDDLER *(Hurries up to Cyrano)* But what a scandal! Montfleury—
The great Montfleury! Did you know the Duc
De Candale was his patron? Who is yours?

CYRANO No one.

THE MEDDLER No one—no patron?

CYRANO I said no.

THE MEDDLER What, no great lord, to cover with his name—

CYRANO *(With visible annoyance)* No, I have told you twice. Must I repeat?
No sir, no patron— *(His hand on his sword)*
But a patroness!

THE MEDDLER And when do you leave Paris?

CYRANO That's as may be.

THE MEDDLER The Duc de Candale has a long arm.

CYRANO Mine

Is longer *(Drawing his sword)* by three feet of steel.

THE MEDDLER Yes, yes,

But do you dream of daring—

CYRANO I do dream

Of daring . . .

THE MEDDLER But—

CYRANO You may go now.

THE MEDDLER But—

CYRANO You may go—

Or tell me why are you staring at my nose!

THE MEDDLER *(In confusion)* No—I—

CYRANO *(Stepping up to him)* Does it astonish you?

THE MEDDLER *(Drawing back)* Your grace

Misunderstands my—

CYRANO Is it long and soft

And dangling, like a trunk?

THE MEDDLER *(Same business)* I never said—

CYRANO Or crooked, like an owl's beak?

THE MEDDLER I—

CYRANO Perhaps

A pimple ornaments the end of it?

THE MEDDLER No—

CYRANO Or a fly parading up and down?
What is this portent?
THE MEDDLER Oh!—
CYRANO This phenomenon?
THE MEDDLER But I have been careful not to look—
CYRANO And why
Not, if you please?
THE MEDDLER Why—
CYRANO It disgusts you, then?
THE MEDDLER My dear sir—
CYRANO Does its color appear to you
Unwholesome?
THE MEDDLER Oh, by no means!
CYRANO Or its form
Obscene?
THE MEDDLER Not in the least—
CYRANO Then why assume
This deprecating manner? Possibly
You find it just a trifle large?
THE MEDDLER *(Babbling)* Oh no!—
Small, very small, infinitesimal—
CYRANO *(Roars)* What!
How? You accuse me of absurdity?
Small—*my nose?* Why—
THE MEDDLER *(Breathless)* My God!—
CYRANO Magnificent,

My nose! . . . You pug, you knob, you button-head,
Know that I glory in this nose of mine,
For a great nose indicates a great man—
Genial, courteous, intellectual,
Virile, courageous—as I am—and such
As you—poor wretch—will never dare to be
Even in imagination. For that face—
That blank, inglorious concavity
Which my right hand finds— *(He strikes him)*

THE MEDDLER Ow!

CYRANO —on top of you,
Is as devoid of pride, of poetry,
Of soul, of picturesqueness, of contour,
Of character, of NOSE in short—as that *(Takes him by the shoulders and turns him around, suiting the action to the word)*
Which at the end of that limp spine of yours
My left foot—

THE MEDDLER *(Escaping)* Help! The Guard!

CYRANO Take notice, all
Who find this feature of my countenance
A theme for comedy! When the humorist
Is noble, then my custom is to show
Appreciation proper to his rank—
More heartfelt . . . and more pointed. . . .

DE GUICHE *(Who has come down from the stage, surrounded by the Marquis)*
Presently

This fellow will grow tiresome.

VALVERT *(Shrugs)* Oh, he blows
His trumpet!

DE GUICHE Well—will no one interfere?

VALVERT No one? *(Looks around)*
Observe. I myself will proceed
To put him in his place. *(He walks up to Cyrano, who has been watching him, and stands there, looking him over with an affected air)*
Ah . . . your nose . . . hem! . . .
Your nose is . . . rather large!

CYRANO *(Gravely)* Rather.

VALVERT *(Simpering)* Oh well—

CYRANO *(Coolly)* Is that all?

VALVERT *(Turns away, with a shrug)* Well, of course—

CYRANO Ah, no, young sir!
You are too simple. Why, you might have said—
Oh, a great many things! Mon dieu, why waste
Your opportunity? For example, thus:—
AGGRESSIVE: I, sir, if that nose were mine,
I'd have it amputated—on the spot!
FRIENDLY: How do you drink with such a nose?
You ought to have a cup made specially.
DESCRIPTIVE: 'Tis a rock—a crag—a cape—
A cape? say rather, a peninsula!
INQUISITIVE: What is that receptacle—
A razor-case or a portfolio?

KINDLY: Ah, do you love the little birds
So much that when they come and sing to you,
You give them this to perch on? INSOLENT:
Sir, when you smoke, the neighbors must suppose
Your chimney is on fire. CAUTIOUS: Take care—
A weight like that might make you topheavy.
THOUGHTFUL: Somebody fetch my parasol—
Those delicate colors fade so in the sun!
PEDANTIC: Does not Aristophanes
Mention a mythologic monster called
Hippocampelephantocamelos?
Surely we have here the original!
FAMILIAR: Well, old torchlight! Hang your hat
Over that chandelier—it hurts my eyes.
ELOQUENT: When it blows, the typhoon howls,
And the clouds darken. DRAMATIC: When it bleeds—
The Red Sea! ENTERPRISING: What a sign
For some perfumer! LYRIC: Hark—the horn
Of Roland calls to summon Charlemagne!—
SIMPLE: When do they unveil the monument?
RESPECTFUL: Sir, I recognize in you
A man of parts, a man of prominence—
RUSTIC: Hey? What? Call that a nose? Na, na—
I be no fool like what you think I be—
That there's a blue cucumber! MILITARY:
Point against cavalry! PRACTICAL: Why not

A lottery with this for the grand prize?
Or—parodying Faustus in the play—
"Was this the nose that launched a thousand ships
And burned the topless towers of Ilium?"
These, my dear sir, are things you might have said
Had you some tinge of letters, or of wit
To color your discourse. But wit,—not so,
You never had an atom—and of letters,
You need but three to write you down—an Ass.
Moreover,—if you had the invention, here
Before these folk to make a jest of me—
Be sure you would not then articulate
The twentieth part of half a syllable
Of the beginning! For I say these things
Lightly enough myself, about myself,
But I allow none else to utter them.

DE GUICHE *(Tries to lead away the amazed* VALVERT) Vicomte—come.

VALVERT *(Choking)* Oh— These arrogant grand airs!—
A clown who—look at him—not even gloves!
No ribbons—no lace—no buckles on his shoes—

CYRANO I carry my adornments on my soul.
I do not dress up like a popinjay;
But inwardly, I keep my daintiness.
I do not bear with me, by any chance,
An insult not yet washed away—a conscience
Yellow with unpurged bile—an honor frayed

To rags, a set of scruples badly worn.
I go caparisoned in gems unseen.
Trailing white plumes of freedom, garlanded
With my good name—no figure of a man,
But a soul clothed in shining armor, hung
With deeds for decorations, twirling—thus—
A bristling wit, and swinging at my side
Courage, and on the stones of this old town
Making the sharp truth ring, like golden spurs!

VALVERT But—

CYRANO But I have no gloves! A pity too!
I had one—the last one of an old pair—
And lost that. Very careless of me. Some
Gentleman offered me an impertinence.
I left it—in his face.

VALVERT Dolt, bumpkin, fool,
Insolent puppy, jobbernowl!

CYRANO *(Removes his hat and bows)* Ah, yes?
And I—Cyrano-Savinien-Hercule
De Bergerac!

VALVERT *(Turns away)* Buffoon!

CYRANO *(Cries out as if suddenly taken with a cramp)* Oh!

VALVERT *(Turns back)* Well, what now?

CYRANO *(With grimaces of anguish)* I must do something to relieve these cramps—
This is what comes of lack of exercise—
Ah!—

VALVERT What is all this?

CYRANO My sword has gone to sleep!

VALVERT *(Draws)* So be it!

CYRANO You shall die exquisitely.

VALVERT *(Contemptuously)* Poet!

CYRANO Why yes, a poet, if you will;
So while we fence, I'll make you a Ballade
Extempore.

VALVERT A Ballade?

CYRANO Yes. You know
What that is?

VALVERT I—

CYRANO The Ballade, sir, is formed
Of three stanzas of eight lines each—

VALVERT Oh, come!

CYRANO And a refrain of four.

VALVERT You—

CYRANO I'll compose
One, while I fight with you; and at the end
Of the last line—thrust home!

VALVERT Will you?

CYRANO I will. *(Declaims)*

"Ballade of the duel at the Hôtel de Bourgogne
Between de Bergerac and a Bœotian."

VALVERT *(Sneering)* What do you mean by that?

CYRANO Oh, that? The title.

THE CROWD *(Excited)* Come on—

A circle—

Quiet—

Down in front!

(TABLEAU. *A ring of interested spectators in the centre of the floor, the Marquis and the Officers mingling with the citizens and common folk. Pages swarming up on men's shoulders to see better; the Ladies in the boxes standing and leaning over. To the right, De Guiche and his following; to the left, Le Bret, Cuigy, Ragueneau, and others of Cyrano's friends)*

CYRANO *(Closes his eyes for an instant)* Stop . . . Let me choose my rimes . . . Now! Here we go— *(He suits the action to the word, throughout the following:)*

Lightly I toss my hat away,
Languidly over my arm let fall
The cloak that covers my bright array—
Then out swords, and to work withal!
A Launcelot, in his Lady's hall . . .
A Spartacus, at the Hippodrome! . . .
I dally awhile with you, dear jackal,
Then, as I end the refrain, thrust home.

(The swords cross—the fight is on)

Where shall I skewer my peacock? . . . Nay,
Better for you to have shunned this brawl!—
Here, in the heart, thro' your ribbons gay?
—In the belly, under your silken shawl?
Hark, how the steel rings musical!

Mark how my point floats, light as the foam,
Ready to drive you back to the wall,
Then, as I end the refrain, thrust home!

Ho, for a rime! . . . You are white as whey—
You break, you cower, you cringe, you . . . crawl!
Tac!—and I parry your last essay:
So may the turn of a hand forestall
Life with its honey, death with its gall;
So may the turn of my fancy roam
Free, for a time, till the rimes recall,
Then, as I end the refrain, thrust home!

(He announces solemnly)

REFRAIN

Prince! Pray God, that is Lord of all,
Pardon your soul, for your time has come!
Beat—pass—fling you aslant, asprawl—
Then, as I end the refrain: . . .

(He lunges; Valvert staggers back and falls into the arms of his friends. Cyrano recovers, and salutes)

—Thrust home!

(Shouts. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs come fluttering down. The Officers surround Cyrano and congratulate him. Ragueneau dances for joy. Le Bret is unable to conceal his enthusiasm. The friends of Valvert hold him up and help him away)

THE CROWD *(In one long cry)* Ah-h!

A CAVALIER Superb!

A Woman Simply sweet!

Ragueneau Magnelephant!

A Marquis A novelty!

Le Bret Bah!

The Crowd *(Thronging around Cyrano)* Compliments — regards —
Bravo! —

A Woman's Voice Why, he's a hero!

A Musketeer *(Advances quickly to Cyrano, with outstretched hands)*
Monsieur, will you
Permit me? — It was altogether fine!
I think I may appreciate these things —
Moreover, I have been stamping for pure joy! *(He retires quickly)*

Cyrano *(To Cuigy)* What was that gentleman's name?

Cuigy Oh . . . D'Artagnan.

Le Bret *(Takes Cyrano's arm)* Come here and tell me —

Cyrano Let this crowd go first — *(To Bellerose)*
May we stay?

Bellerose *(With great respect)* Certainly! *(Cries and cat-calls off stage)*

Jodelet *(Comes down from the door where he has been looking out)*
Hark! — Montfleury —
They are hooting him.

Bellerose *(Solemnly)* *Sic transit gloria!* *(Changes his tone and shouts to the porter and the lamplighter)* — Strike! . . . Close the house! . . . Leave the lights — We rehearse
The new farce after dinner. *(Jodelet and Bellerose go out after elaborately saluting Cyrano)*

The Porter *(To Cyrano)* You do not dine?

CYRANO I?—No! *(The Porter turns away)*

LE BRET Why not?

CYRANO *(Haughtily)* Because— *(Changing his tone when he sees The Porter has gone)*
Because I have
No money.

LE BRET *(Gesture of tossing)* But—the purse of gold?

CYRANO Farewell,
Paternal pension!

LE BRET So you have, until
The first of next month—?

CYRANO Nothing.

LE BRET What a fool!—

CYRANO But—what a gesture!

THE ORANGE GIRL *(Behind her little counter; coughs)* Hem! *(Cyrano and Le Bret look around; she advances timidly)* Pardon, monsieur . . .
A man ought never to go hungry . . . *(Indicating the sideboard)*
See,
I have everything here . . . *(Eagerly)*
Please!—

CYRANO *(Uncovers)* My dear child,
I cannot bend this Gascon pride of mine
To accept such a kindness— Yet, for fear
That I may give you pain if I refuse,
I will take . . . *(He goes to the sideboard and makes his selection)*
Oh, not very much! A grape . . . *(She gives him the bunch; he removes a single grape)*
One only! And a glass of water . . . *(She starts to pour wine into it; he stops her)*

Clear!

And . . . half a macaroon! *(He gravely returns the other half)*

LE BRET Old idiot!

THE ORANGE GIRL Please!—Nothing more?

CYRANO Why yes— Your hand to kiss. *(He kisses the hand which she holds out, as he would the hand of a princess)*

THE ORANGE GIRL Thank you, sir. *(She curtseys)* Good-night. *(She goes out)*

CYRANO Now, I am listening. *(Plants himself before the sideboard and arranges thereon—)* Dinner!— *(—the macaroon)*

Drink!— *(—the glass of water)*

Dessert!— *(—the grape)*

There—now I'll sit down. *(Seats himself)*

Lord, I was hungry! Abominably! *(Eating)* Well?

LE BRET These fatheads with the bellicose grand airs
Will have you ruined if you listen to them;
Talk to a man of sense and hear how all
Your swagger impresses him.

CYRANO *(Finishes his macaroon)* Enormously.

LE BRET The Cardinal—

CYRANO *(Beaming)* Was he there?

LE BRET He must have thought you—

CYRANO Original.

LE BRET Well, but—

CYRANO He is himself
A playwright. He will not be too displeased
That I have closed another author's play.

LE BRET But look at all the enemies you have made!

CYRANO *(Begins on the grape)* How many—do you think?

LE BRET Just forty-eight
Without the women.

CYRANO Count them.

LE BRET Montfleury,
Baro, de Guiche, the Vicomte, the Old Man,
All the Academy—

CYRANO Enough! You make me
Happy!

LE BRET But where is all this leading you?
What is your plan?

CYRANO I have been wandering—
Wasting my force upon too many plans.
Now I have chosen one.

LE BRET What one?

CYRANO The simplest—
To make myself in all things admirable!

LE BRET Hmph!—Well, then, the real reason why you hate
Montfleury— Come, the truth, now!

CYRANO *(Rises)* That Silenus,
Who cannot hold his belly in his arms,
Still dreams of being sweetly dangerous
Among the women—sighs and languishes,
Making sheeps' eyes out of his great frog's face—
I hate him ever since one day he dared

Smile upon—

Oh, my friend, I seemed to see

Over some flower a great snail crawling!

LE BRET *(Amazed)* How,

What? Is it possible?—

CYRANO *(With a bitter smile)* For me to love? . . . *(Changing his tone; seriously)*

I love.

LE BRET May I know? You have never said—

CYRANO Whom I love? Think a moment. Think of me—

Me, whom the plainest woman would despise—

Me, with this nose of mine that marches on

Before me by a quarter of an hour!

Whom should I love? Why—of course—it must be

The woman in the world most beautiful.

LE BRET Most beautiful?

CYRANO In all this world—most sweet

Also; most wise; most witty; and most fair!

LE BRET Who and what is this woman?

CYRANO Dangerous

Mortally, without meaning; exquisite

Without imagining. Nature's own snare

To allure manhood. A white rose wherein

Love lies in ambush for his natural prey.

Who knows her smile has known a perfect thing.

She creates grace in her own image, brings

Heaven to earth in one movement of her hand—

Nor thou, O Venus! balancing thy shell
Over the Mediterranean blue, nor thou,
Diana! marching through broad, blossoming woods,
Art so divine as when she mounts her chair,
And goes abroad through Paris!

LE BRET Oh, well—of course,
That makes everything clear!

CYRANO Transparently.

LE BRET Magdeleine Robin—your cousin?

CYRANO Yes; Roxane.

LE BRET And why not? If you love her, tell her so!
You have covered yourself with glory in her eyes
This very day.

CYRANO My old friend—look at me,
And tell me how much hope remains for me
With this protuberance! Oh I have no more
Illusions! Now and then—bah! I may grow
Tender, walking alone in the blue cool
Of evening, through some garden fresh with flowers
After the benediction of the rain;
My poor big devil of a nose inhales
April . . . and so I follow with my eyes
Where some boy, with a girl upon his arm,
Passes a patch of silver . . . and I feel
Somehow, I wish I had a woman too,
Walking with little steps under the moon,

And holding my arm so, and smiling. Then
I dream—and I forget. . . .
And then I see
The shadow of my profile on the wall!

LE BRET My friend! . . .

CYRANO My friend, I have my bitter days,
Knowing myself so ugly, so alone.
Sometimes—

LE BRET You weep?

CYRANO *(Quickly)* Oh, not that ever! No,
That would be too grotesque—tears trickling down
All the long way along this nose of mine?
I will not so profane the dignity
Of sorrow. Never any tears for me!
Why, there is nothing more sublime than tears,
Nothing!—Shall I make them ridiculous
In my poor person?

LE BRET Love's no more than chance!

CYRANO *(Shakes his head)* No. I love Cleopatra; do I appear
Cæsar? I adore Beatrice; have I
The look of Dante?

LE BRET But your wit—your courage—
Why, that poor child who offered you just now
Your dinner! She—you saw with your own eyes,
Her eyes did not avoid you.

CYRANO *(Thoughtful)* That is true . . .

LE BRET Well then! Roxane herself, watching your duel,
Paler than—

CYRANO Pale?—

LE BRET Her lips parted, her hand
Thus, at her breast— I saw it! Speak to her
Speak, man!

CYRANO Through my nose? She might laugh at me;
That is the one thing in this world I fear!

THE PORTER *(Followed by The Duenna, approaches Cyrano respectfully)*
A lady asking for Monsieur.

CYRANO Mon dieu . . .
Her Duenna!—

THE DUENNA *(A sweeping curtsey)* Monsieur . . .
A message for you:
From our good cousin we desire to know
When and where we may see him privately.

CYRANO *(Amazed)* To see me?

THE DUENNA *(An elaborate reverence)* To see you. We have certain things
To tell you.

CYRANO Certain—

THE DUENNA Things.

CYRANO *(Trembling)* Mon dieu! . . .

THE DUENNA We go
To-morrow, at the first flush of the dawn,
To hear Mass at St. Roch. Then afterwards,
Where can we meet and talk a little?

CYRANO *(Catching Le Bret's arm)* Where? —
I — Ah, mon dieu! . . . mon dieu! . . .

THE DUENNA Well?

CYRANO I am thinking . . .

THE DUENNA And you think?

CYRANO I . . . The shop of Ragueneau . . .
Ragueneau — pastrycook . . .

THE DUENNA Who dwells? —

CYRANO Mon dieu! . . .
Oh, yes . . . Ah, mon dieu! . . . Rue St.-Honoré.

THE DUENNA We are agreed. Remember — seven o'clock.
(Reverence) Until then —

CYRANO I'll be there. *(The Duenna goes out)*

CYRANO *(Falls into the arms of Le Bret)* Me . . . to see me! . . .

LE BRET You are not quite so gloomy.

CYRANO After all,
She knows that I exist — no matter why!

LE BRET So now, you are going to be happy.

CYRANO Now! . . . *(Beside himself)*
I — I am going to be a storm — a flame —
I need to fight whole armies all alone;
I have ten hearts; I have a hundred arms; I feel
Too strong to war with mortals —
(He shouts at the top of his voice) BRING ME GIANTS!

(A moment since, the shadows of the comedians have been visible moving and posturing upon the stage. The violins have taken their places)

A Voice *(From the stage)* Hey—pst—less noise! We are rehearsing here!

Cyrano *(Laughs)* We are going.

(He turns up stage. Through the street door enter Cuigy, Brissaille, and a number of officers, supporting Lignière, who is now thoroughly drunk)

Cuigy Cyrano!

Cyrano What is it?

Cuigy Here—

Here's your stray lamb!

Cyrano *(Recognizes Lignière)* Lignière!—What's wrong with him?

Cuigy He wants you.

Brissaille He's afraid to go home.

Cyrano Why?

Lignière *(Showing a crumpled scrap of paper and speaking with the elaborate logic of profound intoxication)* This letter—hundred against one—that's me—
I'm the one—all because of little song—
Good song— Hundred men, waiting, understand?
Porte de Nesle—way home— Might be dangerous—
Would you permit me spend the night with you?

Cyrano A hundred—is that all? You are going home!

Lignière *(Astonished)* Why—

Cyrano *(In a voice of thunder, indicating the lighted lantern which The Porter holds up as he regards the scene curiously)* Take that lantern! *(Lignière precipitately seizes the lantern)* Forward march! I say
I'll be the man to-night that sees you home.
(To the officers) You others follow—I want an audience!

CUIGY A hundred against one—

CYRANO Those are the odds
To-night!

(The Comedians in their costumes are descending from the stage and joining the group.)

LE BRET But why help this—

CYRANO There goes Le Bret
Growling!

LE BRET —This drunkard here?

CYRANO *(His hand on Le Bret's shoulder)* Because this drunkard—
This tun of sack, this butt of Burgundy—
Once in his life has done one lovely thing:
After the Mass, according to the form,
He saw, one day, the lady of his heart
Take holy water for a blessing. So
This one, who shudders at a drop of rain,
This fellow here—runs headlong to the font
Bends down and drinks it dry!

A SOUBRETTE I say that was
A pretty thought!

CYRANO Ah, was it not?

THE SOUBRETTE *(To the others)* But why
Against one poor poet, a hundred men?

CYRANO March! *(To the officers)* And you gentlemen, remember now,
No rescue— Let me fight alone.

A COMEDIENNE *(Jumps down from the stage)* Come on!
I'm going to watch—

CYRANO Come along!

ANOTHER COMEDIENNE *(Jumps down, speaks to a Comedian costumed as an old man)*
You, Cassandre?

CYRANO Come all of you—the Doctor, Isabelle,
Léandre—the whole company—a swarm
Of murmuring, golden bees—we'll parody
Italian farce and Tragedy-of-Blood;
Ribbons for banners, masks for blazonry,
And tambourines to be our rolling drums!

ALL THE WOMEN *(Jumping for joy)* Bravo!—My hood— My cloak— Hurry!

JODELET *(Mock heroic)* Lead on!—

CYRANO *(To the violins)* You violins—play us an overture— *(The violins join the procession which is forming. The lighted candles are snatched from the stage and distributed; it becomes a torchlight procession)*
Bravo!—Officers— Ladies in costume—
And twenty paces in advance.... *(He takes his station as he speaks)*
Myself,
Alone, with glory fluttering over me,
Alone as Lucifer at war with heaven!
Remember—no one lifts a hand to help—
Ready there? One . . . two . . . three! Porter, the doors! . . .
(The Porter flings wide the great doors. We see in the dim moonlight a corner of old Paris, purple and picturesque)
Look—Paris dreams—nocturnal, nebulous,
Under blue moonbeams hung from wall to wall—
Nature's own setting for the scene we play!—

Yonder, behind her veil of mist, the Seine,
Like a mysterious and magic mirror
Trembles—
And you shall see what you shall see!

ALL To the Porte de Nesle!

CYRANO *(Erect upon the threshold)* To the Porte de Nesle! *(He turns back for a moment to the Soubrette)* Did you not ask, my dear, why against one
Singer they send a hundred swords! *(Quietly, drawing his own sword)* Because
They know this one man for a friend of mine!

(He goes out. The procession follows: Lignière zigzagging at its head, then the Comediennes on the arms of the Officers, then the Comedians, leaping and dancing as they go. It vanishes into the night to the music of the violins, illuminated by the flickering glimmer of the candles.)

(CURTAIN)

THE SECOND ACT

THE BAKERY OF THE POETS

THE *Shop of Ragueneau, Baker and Pastrycook: a spacious affair at the corner of the Rue St.-Honoré and the Rue de l'Arbre Sec. The street, seen vaguely through the glass panes in the door at the back, is gray in the first light of dawn.*

In the foreground, at the Left, a Counter is surmounted by a Canopy of wrought iron from which are hanging ducks, geese, and white peacocks. Great crockery jars hold bouquets of common flowers, yellow sunflowers in particular. On the same side farther back, a huge fireplace; in front of it, between great andirons, of which each one supports a little saucepan, roast fowls revolve and weep into their dripping-pans. To the Right at the First Entrance, a door. Beyond it, Second Entrance, a staircase leads up to a little dining-room under the eaves, its interior visible through open shutters. A table is set

there and a tiny Flemish candlestick is lighted; there one may retire to eat and drink in private. A wooden gallery, extending from the head of the stairway, seems to lead to other little dining-rooms.

In the centre of the shop, an iron ring hangs by a rope over a pulley so that it can be raised or lowered; adorned with game of various kinds hung from it by hooks, it has the appearance of a sort of gastronomic chandelier.

In the shadow under the staircase, ovens are glowing. The spits revolve; the copper pots and pans gleam ruddily. Pastries in pyramids. Hams hanging from the rafters. The morning baking is in progress: a bustle of tall cooks and timid scullions and scurrying apprentices; a blossoming of white caps adorned with cock's feathers or the wings of guinea fowl. On wicker trays or on great metal platters they bring in rows of pastries and fancy dishes of various kinds.

Tables are covered with trays of cakes and rolls; others with chairs placed about them are set for guests.

One little table in a corner disappears under a heap of papers. At the CURTAIN RISE *Ragueneau is seated there. He is writing poetry.*

A PASTRYCOOK *(Brings in a dish)* Fruits *en gelee!*

SECOND PASTRYCOOK *(Brings dish)* Custard!

THIRD PASTRYCOOK *(Brings roast peacock ornamented with feathers)* Peacock *roti!*

FOURTH PASTRYCOOK *(Brings tray of cakes)* Cakes and confections!

FIFTH PASTRYCOOK *(Brings earthen dish)* Beef *en casserole!*

RAGUENEAU *(Raises his head; returns to mere earth)*

Over the coppers of my kitchen flows
The frosted-silver dawn. Silence awhile
The god who sings within thee, Ragueneau!

Lay down the lute—the oven calls for thee!

(Rises; goes to one of the cooks) Here's a hiatus in your sauce; fill up

The measure.

THE COOK How much?

RAGUENEAU *(Measures on his finger)* One more dactyl.

THE COOK Huh? . . .

FIRST PASTRYCOOK Rolls!

SECOND PASTRYCOOK Roulades!

RAGUENEAU *(Before the fireplace)* Veil, O Muse, thy virgin eyes

From the lewd gleam of these terrestrial fires!

(To First Pastrycook) Your rolls lack balance. Here's the proper form—

An equal hemistich on either side,

And the cæsura in between.

(To another, pointing out an unfinished pie) Your house

Of crust should have a roof upon it.

(To another, who is seated on the hearth, placing poultry on a spit) And you—

Along the interminable spit, arrange

The modest pullet and the lordly Turk

Alternately, my son—as great Malherbe

Alternates male and female rimes. Remember,

A couplet, or a roast, should be well turned.

AN APPRENTICE *(Advances with a dish covered by a napkin)*

Master, I thought of you when I designed

This, hoping it might please you.

RAGUENEAU Ah! A Lyre—

THE APPRENTICE In puff-paste—

RAGUENEAU And the jewels—candied fruit!

THE APPRENTICE And the strings, barley-sugar!

RAGUENEAU *(Gives him money)* Go and drink
My health. *(Lise enters)*
St!—My wife—Circulate, and hide
That money! *(Shows the lyre to Lise, with a languid air)*
Graceful—yes?

LISE Ridiculous! *(She places on the counter a pile of paper bags)*

RAGUENEAU Paper bags? Thank you . . . *(He looks at them)*
Ciel! My manuscripts!
The sacred verses of my poets—rent
Asunder, limb from limb—butchered to make
Base packages of pastry! Ah, you are one
Of those insane Bacchantes who destroyed
Orpheus!

LISE Your dirty poets left them here
To pay for eating half our stock-in-trade:
We ought to make some profit out of them!

RAGUENEAU Ant! Would you blame the locust for his song?

LISE I blame the locust for his appetite!
There used to be a time—before you had
Your hungry friends—you never called me Ants—
No, nor Bacchantes!

RAGUENEAU What a way to use
Poetry!

LISE Well, what is the use of it?

RAGUENEAU But, my dear girl, what would you do with prose? *(Two Children enter)* Well, dears?

A CHILD Three little patties.

RAGUENEAU *(Serves them)* There we are!

All hot and brown.

THE CHILD Would you mind wrapping them?

RAGUENEAU One of my paper bags! . . .

Oh, certainly. *(Reads from the bag, as he is about to wrap the patties in it)*

"Ulysses, when he left Penelope"—

Not that one! *(Takes another bag; reads)*

"Phoebus, golden-crowned"—

Not that one.

LISE Well? They are waiting!

RAGUENEAU Very well, very well!—

The Sonnet to Phyllis . . .

Yet—it does seem hard . . .

LISE Made up your mind—at last! Mph!—Jack-o'-Dreams!

RAGUENEAU *(As her back is turned, calls back the children, who are already at the door)*

Pst!—Children— Give me back the bag. Instead

Of three patties, you shall have six of them! *(Makes the exchange. The Children go out. He reads from the bag, as he smooths it out tenderly)*

"Phyllis"—

A spot of butter on her name!—

"Phyllis"—

CYRANO *(Enters hurriedly)* What is the time?

RAGUENEAU Six o'Clock.

CYRANO One hour more . . .

RAGUENEAU Felicitations!

CYRANO And for what?

RAGUENEAU Your victory! I saw it all—

CYRANO Which one?

RAGUENEAU At the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

CYRANO Oh—the duel!

RAGUENEAU The duel in Rime!

LISE He talks of nothing else.

CYRANO Nonsense!

RAGUENEAU *(Fencing and foining with a spit, which he snatches up from the hearth)*

"Then, as I end the refrain, thrust home!"

"Then, as I end the refrain"—

Gods! What a line!

"Then, as I end"—

CYRANO What time now, Ragueneau?

RAGUENEAU *(Petrified at the full extent of a lunge, while he looks at the clock)*

Five after six— *(Recovers)* *"—thrust home!"*

A Ballade, too!

LISE *(To Cyrano, who in passing has mechanically shaken hands with her)*

Your hand—what have you done?

CYRANO Oh, my hand?—Nothing.

RAGUENEAU What danger now—

CYRANO No danger.

LISE I believe

He is lying.

CYRANO Why? Was I looking down my nose?
That must have been a devil of a lie! *(Changing his tone; to Ragueneau)*
I expect someone. Leave us here alone,
When the time comes.

RAGUENEAU How can I? In a moment,
My poets will be here.

LISE To break their . . . fast!

CYRANO Take them away, then, when I give the sign.
—What time?

RAGUENEAU Ten minutes after.

CYRANO Have you a pen?

RAGUENEAU *(Offers him a pen)* An eagle's feather!

A MUSKETEER *(Enters, and speaks to Lise in a stentorian voice)* Greeting!

CYRANO *(To Ragueneau)* Who is this?

RAGUENEAU My wife's friend. A terrific warrior,
So he says.

CYRANO Ah— I see. *(Takes up the pen; waves Ragueneau away)* Only to write—
To fold— To give it to her—and to go . . . *(Throws down the pen)*
Coward! And yet—the Devil take my soul
If I dare speak one word to her . . . *(To Ragueneau)* What time now?

RAGUENEAU A quarter after six.

CYRANO *(Striking his breast)* —One little word
Of all the many thousand I have here!
Whereas in writing . . . *(Takes up the pen)*
Come, I'll write to her
That letter I have written on my heart,

Torn up, and written over many times—
So many times . . . that all I have to do
Is to remember, and to write it down. *(He writes. Through the glass of the door appear vague and hesitating shadows. The Poets enter, clothed in rusty black and spotted with mud)*

LISE *(To Ragueneau)* Here come your scarecrows!

FIRST POET Comrade!

SECOND POET *(Takes both Ragueneau's hands)* My dear brother!

THIRD POET *(Sniffing)* O Lord of Roasts, how sweet thy dwellings are!

FOURTH POET Phœbus Apollo of the Silver Spoon!

FIFTH POET Cupid of Cookery!

RAGUENEAU *(Surrounded, embraced, beaten on the back)* These geniuses,
They put one at one's ease!

FIRST POET We were delayed
By the crowd at the Porte de Nesle.

SECOND POET Dead men
All scarred and gory, scattered on the stones,
Villainous-looking scoundrels—eight of them.

CYRANO *(Looks up an instant)* Eight? I thought only seven—

RAGUENEAU Do you know
The hero of this hecatomb?

CYRANO I? . . . No.

LISE *(To the Musketeer)* Do you?

THE MUSKETEER Hmm—perhaps!

FIRST POET They say one man alone
Put to flight all this crowd.

SECOND POET Everywhere lay
Swords, daggers, pikes, bludgeons—
CYRANO *(Writing)* "*Your eyes . . .*"
THIRD POET As far
As the Quai des Orfèvres, hats and cloaks—
FIRST POET Why, that man must have been the devil!
CYRANO "*Your lips . . .*"
FIRST POET Some savage monster might have done this thing!
CYRANO "*Looking upon you, I grow faint with fear . . .*"
SECOND POET What have you written lately, Ragueneau?
CYRANO "*Your Friends*—"*Who loves you . . .*"
So. No signature;
I'll give it to her myself.
RAGUENEAU A Recipe in Rime.
THIRD POET Read us your rimes!
FOURTH POET Here's a brioche
Cocking its hat at me. *(He bites off the top of it)*
FIRST POET Look how those buns
Follow the hungry poet with their eyes—
Those almond eyes!
SECOND POET We are listening—
THIRD POET See this cream-puff—
Fat little baby, drooling while it smiles!
SECOND POET *(Nibbling at the pastry Lyre)* For the first time, the Lyre is my support.
RAGUENEAU *(Coughs, adjusts his cap, strikes an attitude)* A Recipe in Rime—
SECOND POET *(Gives First Poet a dig with his elbow)* Your breakfast?

FIRST POET Dinner!

RAGUENEAU *(Declaims)* *A Recipe for Making Almond Tarts.*

Beat your eggs, the yolk and white,
Very light;
Mingle with their creamy fluff
Drops of lime-juice, cool and green;
Then pour in
Milk of Almonds, just enough.

Dainty patty-pans, embraced
In puff-paste—
Have these ready within reach;
With your thumb and finger, pinch
Half an inch
Up around the edge of each—

Into these, a score or more,
Slowly pour
All your store of custard; so
Take them, bake them golden-brown—
Now sit down! . . .
Almond tartlets, Ragueneau!

THE POETS Delicious! Melting!

A POET *(Chokes)* Humph!

CYRANO *(To Ragueneau)* Do you not see
Those fellows fattening themselves?—

P. Sauvage

RAGUENEAU I know.

I would not look—it might embarrass them—

You see, I love a friendly audience.

Besides—another vanity—I am pleased

When they enjoy my cooking.

CYRANO *(Slaps him on the back)* Be off with you!—

(Ragueneau goes upstage) Good little soul! *(Calls to Lise)* Madame!—

(She leaves the Musketeer and comes down to him) This musketeer—

He is making love to you?

LISE *(Haughtily)* If any man

Offends my virtue—all I have to do

Is look at him—once!

CYRANO *(Looks at her gravely; she drops her eyes)* I do not find

Those eyes of yours unconquerable.

LISE *(Panting)* —Ah!

CYRANO *(Raising his voice a little)* Now listen— I am fond of Ragueneau;

I allow no one—do you understand?—

To . . . take his name in vain!

LISE You think—

CYRANO *(Ironic emphasis)* I think

I interrupt you. *(He salutes the Musketeer, who has heard without daring to resent the warning. Lise goes to the Musketeer as he returns Cyrano's salute)*

LISE You—you swallow that?—

You ought to have pulled his nose!

THE MUSKETEER His nose?—His nose! . . . *(He goes out hurriedly. Roxane and the Duenna appear outside the door)*

CYRANO *(Nods to Ragueneau)* Pst! —

RAGUENEAU *(To the Poets)* Come inside —

CYRANO *(Impatient)* Pst! . . . Pst! . . .

RAGUENEAU We shall be more
Comfortable . . . *(He leads The Poets into inner room)*

FIRST POET The cakes!

SECOND POET Bring them along! *(They go out)*

CYRANO If I can see the faintest spark of hope,
Then — *(Throws door open — bows)*
Welcome! *(Roxane enters, followed by the Duenna, whom Cyrano detains)*
Pardon me — one word —

THE DUENNA Take two.

CYRANO Have you a good digestion?

THE DUENNA Wonderful!

CYRANO Good. Here are two sonnets, by Benserade —

THE DUENNA Euh?

CYRANO Which I fill for you with éclairs.

THE DUENNA Ooo!

CYRANO Do you like cream-puffs?

THE DUENNA Only with whipped cream.

CYRANO Here are three . . . six — embosomed in a poem
By Saint-Amant. This ode of Chapelin
Looks deep enough to hold — a jelly roll.
— Do you love Nature?

THE DUENNA Mad about it.

CYRANO Then

Go out and eat these in the street. Do not
Return—

THE DUENNA Oh, but—

CYRANO Until you finish them. *(Down to Roxane)*
Blessed above all others be the hour
When you remembered to remember me,
And came to tell me . . . what?

ROXANE *(Takes off her mask)* First let me thank you
Because . . . That man . . . that creature, whom your sword
Made sport of yesterday— His patron, one—

CYRANO De Guiche?—

ROXANE —who thinks himself in love with me
Would have forced that man upon me for—a husband—

CYRANO I understand—so much the better then!
I fought, not for my nose, but your bright eyes.

ROXANE And then, to tell you—but before I can
Tell you— Are you, I wonder, still the same
Big brother—almost—that you used to be
When we were children, playing by the pond
In the old garden down there—

CYRANO I remember—
Every summer you came to Bergerac! . . .

ROXANE You used to make swords out of bulrushes—

CYRANO Your dandelion-dolls with golden hair—

ROXANE And those green plums—

CYRANO And those black mulberries—

ROXANE In those days, you did everything I wished!

CYRANO Roxane, in short skirts, was called Magdeleine.

ROXANE Was I pretty?

CYRANO Oh—not too plain!

ROXANE Sometimes

When you had hurt your hand you used to come
Running to me—and I would be your mother,
And say— Oh, in a very grown-up voice: *(She takes his hand)*
"*Now*, what have you been doing to yourself?
Let me see—" *(She sees the hand—starts)* Oh!—
Wait— I said *Let me see!*
Still—at your age! How did you do that?

CYRANO Playing
With the big boys, down by the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE *(Sits at a table and wets her handkerchief in a glass of water)* Come here to me.

CYRANO —Such a wise little mother!

ROXANE And tell me, while I wash this blood away,
How many you—played with?

CYRANO Oh, about a hundred.

ROXANE Tell me.

CYRANO No. Let me go. Tell me what *you*
Were going to tell *me*—if you dared?

ROXANE *(Still holding his hand)* I think
I do dare—now. It seems like long ago
When I could tell you things. Yes—I dare . . . Listen:
I . . . love someone.

CYRANO Ah! . . .

ROXANE Someone who does not know.

CYRANO Ah! . . .

ROXANE At least—not yet.

CYRANO Ah! . . .

ROXANE But he will know

Some day.

CYRANO Ah! . . .

ROXANE A big boy who loves me too,

And is afraid of me, and keeps away,

And never says one word.

CYRANO Ah! . . .

ROXANE Let me have

Your hand a moment—why how hot it is!—

I know. I see him trying . . .

CYRANO Ah! . . .

ROXANE There now! *(She finishes bandaging the hand with her handkerchief)*

Is that better?— Besides—only to think—

(This is a secret.) He is a soldier too,

In your own regiment—

CYRANO Ah! . . .

ROXANE Yes, in the Guards,

Your company too.

CYRANO Ah! . . .

ROXANE And such a man!

He is proud—noble—young—brave—beautiful—

CYRANO *(Turns pale; rises)* Beautiful! —

ROXANE What's the matter?

CYRANO *(Smiling)* Nothing — this —

My sore hand!

ROXANE Well, I love him. That is all.

Oh — and I never saw him anywhere

Except the *Comèdie.*

CYRANO You have never spoken? —

ROXANE Only our eyes . . .

CYRANO Why, then — How do you know? —

ROXANE People talk about people; and I hear

Things . . . and I know.

CYRANO You say he is in the Guards:

His name?

ROXANE Baron Christian de Neuvillette.

CYRANO He is not in the Guards.

ROXANE Yes. Since this morning.

Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

CYRANO So soon! . . .

So soon we lose our hearts! —

But, my dear child, —

THE DUENNA *(Opens the door)* I have eaten the cakes, Monsieur de Bergerac!

CYRANO Good! Now go out and read the poetry! *(The Duenna disappears)*

— But, my dear child! You, who love only words,

Wit, the grand manner — Why, for all you know,

The man may be a savage, or a fool.

ROXANE His curls are like a hero from D'Urfé.

CYRANO His mind may be as curly as his hair.

ROXANE Not with such eyes. I read his soul in them.

CYRANO Yes, all our souls are written in our eyes!
But—if he be a bungler?

ROXANE Then I shall die—
There!

CYRANO *(After a pause)* And you brought me here to tell me this?
I do not yet quite understand, Madame,
The reason for your confidence.

ROXANE They say
That in your company— It frightens me—
You are all Gascons . . .

CYRANO And we pick a quarrel
With any flat-foot who intrudes himself,
Whose blood is not pure Gascon like our own?
Is this what you have heard?

ROXANE I am so afraid
For him!

CYRANO *(Between his teeth)* Not without reason!—

ROXANE And I thought
You . . . You were so brave, so invincible
Yesterday, against all those brutes!—If you,
Whom they all fear—

CYRANO Oh well— I will defend
Your little Baron.

ROXANE Will you? Just for me?
Because I have always been—your friend!

CYRANO Of course . . .

ROXANE Will you be *his* friend?

CYRANO I will be his friend.

ROXANE And never let him fight a duel?

CYRANO No—never.

ROXANE Oh, but you are a darling!—I must go—
You never told me about last night— Why,
You must have been a hero! Have him write
And tell me all about it—will you?

CYRANO Of course . . .

ROXANE *(Kisses her hand)* I always did love you!—A hundred men
Against one— Well. . . . Adieu. We are great friends,
Are we not?

CYRANO Of course . . .

ROXANE He *must* write to me—
A hundred— You shall tell me the whole story
Some day, when I have time. A hundred men—
What courage!

CYRANO *(Salutes as she goes out)* Oh . . . I have done better since!

(The door closes after her. Cyrano remains motionless, his eyes on the ground. Pause. The other door opens; Ragueneau puts in his head)

RAGUENEAU May I come in?

CYRANO *(Without moving)* Yes . . . *(Ragueneau and his friends re-enter. At the same*

time, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux appears at the street door in uniform as Captain of the Guards; recognizes Cyrano with a sweeping gesture)

CARBON Here he is! — Our hero!

CYRANO *(Raises his head and salutes)* Our Captain!

CARBON We know! All our company
Are here —

CYRANO *(Recoils)* No —

CARBON Come! They are waiting for you.

CYRANO No!

CARBON *(Tries to lead him out)* Only across the street — Come!

CYRANO Please —

CARBON *(Goes to the door and shouts in a voice of thunder)* Our champion
Refuses! He is not feeling well to-day!

A VOICE OUTSIDE Ah! Sandious! *(Noise outside of swords and trampling feet approaching)*

CARBON Here they come now!

THE CADETS *(Entering the shop)* Mille dious! —
Mordious! — Capdedious! — Pocapdedious!

RAGUENEAU *(In astonishment)* Gentlemen —
You are all Gascons?

THE CADETS All!

FIRST CADET *(To Cyrano)* Bravo!

CYRANO Baron!

ANOTHER CADET *(Takes both his hands)* Vivat!

CYRANO Baron!

THIRD CADET Come to my arms!

CYRANO Baron!

OTHERS To mine!—To mine!—

CYRANO Baron . . . Baron . . . Have mercy—

RAGUENEAU You are all Barons too?

THE CADETS *Are* we?

RAGUENEAU Are they? . . .

FIRST CADET Our coronets would star the midnight sky!

LE BRET *(Enters; hurries to Cyrano)*

The whole Town's looking for you! Raving mad—

A triumph! Those who saw the fight—

CYRANO I hope

You have not told them where I—

LE BRET *(Rubbing his hands)* Certainly

I told them!

CITIZEN *(Enters, followed by a group)* Listen! Shut the door!—Here comes

All Paris! *(The street outside fills with a shouting crowd. Chairs and carriages stop at the door)*

LE BRET *(Aside to Cyrano, smiling)* And Roxane?

CYRANO *(Quickly)* Hush!

THE CROWD OUTSIDE Cyrano! *(A mob bursts into the shop. Shouts, acclamations, general disturbance)*

RAGUENEAU *(Standing on a table)* My shop invaded— They'll break everything—

Glorious!

SEVERAL MEN *(Crowding about Cyrano)* My friend! . . . My friend! . . .

CYRANO Why, yesterday

I did not have so many friends!

LE BRET Success
At last!

A MARQUIS *(Runs to Cyrano, with outstretched hands)* My dear — really! —

CYRANO *(Coldly)* So? And how long
Have I been dear to you?

ANOTHER MARQUIS One moment — pray!
I have two ladies in my carriage here;
Let me present you —

CYRANO Certainly! And first,
Who will present you, sir, — to me?

LE BRET *(Astounded)* Why, what
The devil? —

CYRANO Hush!

A MAN OF LETTERS *(With a portfolio)* May I have the details? . . .

CYRANO You may not.

LE BRET *(Plucking Cyrano's sleeve)* Théophraste Renaudot! — Editor
Of the *Gazette* — your reputation! . . .

CYRANO No!

A POET *(Advances)* Monsieur —

CYRANO Well?

THE POET Your full name? I will compose
A pentacrostic —

ANOTHER Monsieur —

CYRANO That will do! *(Movement. The crowd arranges itself. De Guiche appears, escorted by Cuigy, Brissaille, and the other officers who were with Cyrano at the close of the First Act)*

CUIGY *(Goes to Cyrano)* Monsieur de Guiche! — *(Murmur. Everyone moves)*
A message from the Marshal
De Gassion —

DE GUICHE *(Saluting Cyrano)* Who wishes to express
Through me his admiration. He has heard
Of your affair —

THE CROWD Bravo!

CYRANO *(Bowing)* The Marshal speaks
As an authority.

DE GUICHE He said just now
The story would have been incredible
Were it not for the witness —

CUIGY Of our eyes!

LE BRET *(Aside to Cyrano)* What is it?

CYRANO Hush! —

LE BRET Something is wrong with you;
Are you in pain?

CYRANO *(Recovering himself)* In pain? Before this crowd? *(His moustache bristles. He throws out his chest)*
I? In pain? You shall see!

DE GUICHE *(To whom Cuigy has been whispering)* Your name is known
Already as a soldier. You are one
Of those wild Gascons, are you not?

CYRANO The Guards,
Yes. A Cadet.

A CADET *(In a voice of thunder)* One of ourselves!

DE GUICHE Ah! So—

Then all these gentlemen with the haughty air,

These are the famous—

CARBON Cyrano!

CYRANO Captain?

CARBON Our troop being all present, be so kind

As to present them to the Comte de Guiche!

CYRANO *(With a gesture presenting the Cadets to De Guiche declaims:)*

The Cadets of Gascoyne—the defenders
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux:
Free fighters, free lovers, free spenders—
The Cadets of Gascoyne—the defenders
Of old homes, old names, and old splendors—
A proud and a pestilent crew!
The Cadets of Gascoyne—the defenders
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

Hawk-eyed, they stare down all contenders—
The wolf bares his fangs as they do—
Make way there, you fat money-lenders!
(Hawk-eyed, they stare down all contenders)
Old boots that have been to the menders,
Old cloaks that are worn through and through—
Hawk-eyed, they stare down all contenders—
The wolf bares his fangs as they do!

Skull-breakers they are, and sword-benders;
Red blood is their favorite brew;
Hot haters and loyal befrienders,
Skull-breakers they are, and sword-benders.
Wherever a quarrel engenders,
They're ready and waiting for you!
Skull-breakers they are, and sword-benders;
Red blood is their favorite brew!

Behold them, our Gascon defenders
Who win every woman they woo!
There's never a dame but surrenders—
Behold them, our Gascon defenders!
Young wives who are clever pretenders—
Old husbands who house the cuckoo—
Behold them—our Gascon defenders
Who win every woman they woo!

DE GUICHE *(Languidly, sitting in a chair)* Poets are fashionable nowadays
To have about one. Would you care to join
My following?

CYRANO No sir. I do not follow.

DE GUICHE Your duel yesterday amused my uncle
The Cardinal. I might help you there.

LE BRET Grand Dieu!

DE GUICHE I suppose you have written a tragedy—
They all have.

LE BRET *(Aside to Cyrano)* Now at last you'll have it played—
Your *Agrippine!*

DE GUICHE Why not? Take it to him.

CYRANO *(Tempted)* Really—

DE GUICHE He is himself a dramatist;
Let him rewrite a few lines here and there,
And he'll approve the rest.

CYRANO *(His face falls again)* Impossible.
My blood curdles to think of altering
One comma.

DE GUICHE Ah, but when he likes a thing
He pays well.

CYRANO Yes—but not so well as I—
When I have made a line that sings itself
So that I love the sound of it—I pay
Myself a hundred times.

DE GUICHE You are proud, my friend.

CYRANO You have observed that?

A CADET *(Enters with a drawn sword, along the whole blade of which is transfixed a collection of disreputable hats, their plumes draggled, their crowns cut and torn)*
Cyrano! See here—
Look what we found this morning in the street—
The plumes dropped in their flight by those fine birds
Who showed the white feather!

CARBON Spoils of the hunt—
Well mounted!

THE CROWD Ha-ha-ha!

CUIGY Whoever hired
Those rascals, he must be an angry man
To-day!

BRISSAILLE Who was it? Do you know?

DE GUICHE Myself!— *(The laughter ceases)*
I hired them to do the sort of work
We do not soil our hands with—punishing
A drunken poet.... *(Uncomfortable silence)*

THE CADET *(To Cyrano)* What shall we do with them?
They ought to be preserved before they spoil—

CYRANO *(Takes the sword, and in the gesture of saluting De Guiche with it, makes all the hats slide off at his feet)* Sir, will you not return these to your friends?

DE GUICHE My chair—my porters here—immediately! *(To Cyrano violently)*
—As for you, sir!—

A VOICE *(In the street)* The chair of Monseigneur
Le Comte de Guiche!—

DE GUICHE *(Who has recovered his self-control; smiling)*
Have you read *Don Quixote?*

CYRANO I have—and found myself the hero.

A PORTER *(Appears at the door)* Chair
Ready!

DE GUICHE Be so good as to read once more
The chapter of the windmills.

CYRANO *(Gravely)* Chapter Thirteen.

DE GUICHE Windmills, remember, if you fight with them—

CYRANO My enemies change, then, with every wind?

DE GUICHE —May swing round their huge arms and cast you down
Into the mire.

CYRANO Or up—among the stars! *(De Guiche goes out. We see him get into the chair. The Officers follow murmuring among themselves. Le Bret goes up with them. The crowd goes out)*

CYRANO *(Saluting with burlesque politeness, those who go out without daring to take leave of him)* Gentlemen. . . . Gentlemen. . . .

LE BRET *(As the door closes, comes down, shaking his clenched hands to heaven)*
You have done it now—
You have made your fortune!

CYRANO There you go again,
Growling!—

LE BRET At least this latest pose of yours—
Ruining every chance that comes your way—
Becomes exaggerated—

CYRANO Very well,
Then I exaggerate!

LE BRET *(Triumphantly)* Oh, you do!

CYRANO Yes;
On principle. There are things in this world
A man does well to carry to extremes.

LE BRET Stop trying to be Three Musketeers in one!
Fortune and glory—

CYRANO What would you have me do?
Seek for the patronage of some great man,

And like a creeping vine on a tall tree
Crawl upward, where I cannot stand alone?
No thank you! Dedicate, as others do,
Poems to pawnbrokers? Be a buffoon
In the vile hope of teasing out a smile
On some cold face? No thank you! Eat a toad
For breakfast every morning? Make my knees
Callous, and cultivate a supple spine,—
Wear out my belly grovelling in the dust?
No thank you! Scratch the back of any swine
That roots up gold for me? Tickle the horns
Of Mammon with my left hand, while my right
Too proud to know his partner's business,
Takes in the fee? No thank you! Use the fire
God gave me to burn incense all day long
Under the nose of wood and stone? No thank you!
Shall I go leaping into ladies' laps
And licking fingers? — or — to change the form —
Navigating with madrigals for oars,
My sails full of the sighs of dowagers?
No thank you! Publish verses at my own
Expense? No thank you! Be the patron saint
Of a small group of literary souls
Who dine together every Tuesday? No,
I thank you! Shall I labor night and day
To build a reputation on one song,

And never write another? Shall I find
True genius only among Geniuses,
Palpitate over little paragraphs,
And struggle to insinuate my name
Into the columns of the *Mercury?*
No thank you! Calculate, scheme, be afraid,
Love more to make a visit than a poem,
Seek introductions, favors, influences? —
No thank you! No, I thank you! And again
I thank you! — But . . .
To sing, to laugh, to dream,
To walk in my own way and be alone,
Free, with an eye to see things as they are,
A voice that means manhood — to cock my hat
Where I choose — At a word, a *Yes*, a *No*,
To fight — or write. To travel any road
Under the sun, under the stars, nor doubt
If fame or fortune lie beyond the bourne —
Never to make a line I have not heard
In my own heart; yet, with all modesty
To say: "My soul, be satisfied with flowers,
With fruit, with weeds even; but gather them
In the one garden you may call your own."
So, when I win some triumph, by some chance,
Render no share to Cæsar — in a word,
I am too proud to be a parasite,

And if my nature wants the germ that grows
Towering to heaven like the mountain pine,
Or like the oak, sheltering multitudes—
I stand, not high it may be—but alone!

LE BRET Alone, yes!—But why stand against the world?
What devil has possessed you now, to go
Everywhere making yourself enemies?

CYRANO Watching you other people making friends
Everywhere—as a dog makes friends! I mark
The manner of these canine courtesies
And think: "My friends are of a cleaner breed;
Here comes—thank God!—another enemy!"

LE BRET But this is madness!

CYRANO Method, let us say.
It is my pleasure to displease. I love
Hatred. Imagine how it feels to face
The volley of a thousand angry eyes—
The bile of envy and the froth of fear
Spattering little drops about me— You—
Good nature all around you, soft and warm—
You are like those Italians, in great cowls
Comfortable and loose— Your chin sinks down
Into the folds, your shoulders droop. But I—
The Spanish ruff I wear around my throat
Is like a ring of enemies; hard, proud,
Each point another pride, another thorn—

So that I hold myself erect perforce,
Wearing the hatred of the common herd
Haughtily, the harsh collar of Old Spain,
At once a fetter and—a halo!

LE BRET Yes . . . *(After a silence, draws Cyrano's arm through his own)*
Tell this to all the world— And then to me
Say very softly that . . . She loves you not.

CYRANO *(Quickly)* Hush! *(A moment since, Christian has entered and mingled with the Cadets, who do not offer to speak to him. Finally, he sits down alone at a small table, where he is served by Lise)*

A CADET *(Rises from a table up stage, his glass in his hand)* Cyrano!—Your story!

CYRANO Presently . . . *(He goes up, on the arm of Le Bret, talking to him. The Cadets come down stage)*

THE CADET The story of the combat! An example
For— *(He stops by the table where Christian is sitting)*
—this young tadpole here.

CHRISTIAN *(Looks up)* Tadpole?

ANOTHER CADET Yes, you!—
You narrow-gutted Northerner!

CHRISTIAN Sir?

FIRST CADET Hark ye,
Monsieur de Neuvillette: You are to know
There is a certain subject—I would say,
A certain object—never to be named
Among us: utterly unmentionable!

CHRISTIAN And that is?

THIRD CADET *(In an awful voice)* Look at me! . . . *(He strikes his nose three times with his finger, mysteriously)*
You understand?

CHRISTIAN Why, yes; the—

FOURTH CADET Sh! . . . We never speak that word— *(Indicating Cyrano by a gesture)*
To breathe it is to have to do with HIM!

FIFTH CADET *(Speaks through his nose)* He has exterminated several
Whose tone of voice suggested . . .

SIXTH CADET *(In a hollow tone; rising from under the table on all fours)* Would you die
Before your time? Just mention anything
Convex . . . or cartilaginous . . .

SEVENTH CADET *(His hand on Christian's shoulder)* One word—
One syllable—one gesture—nay, one sneeze—
Your handkerchief becomes your winding-sheet! *(Silence. In a circle around Christian, arms crossed, they regard him expectantly)*

CHRISTIAN *(Rises and goes to Carbon, who is conversing with an officer, and pretending not to see what is taking place)* Captain!

CARBON *(Turns, and looks him over)* Sir?

CHRISTIAN What is the proper thing to do
When Gascons grow too boastful?

CARBON Prove to them
That one may be a Norman, and have courage. *(Turns his back)*

CHRISTIAN I thank you.

FIRST CADET *(To Cyrano)* Come—the story!

ALL The story!

CYRANO *(Comes down)* Oh,

My story? Well . . . *(They all draw up their stools and group themselves around him, eagerly. Christian places himself astride of a chair, his arms on the back of it)*

I marched on, all alone
To meet those devils. Overhead, the moon
Hung like a gold watch at the fob of heaven,
Till suddenly some Angel rubbed a cloud,
As it might be his handkerchief, across
The shining crystal, and—the night came down.
No lamps in those back streets— It was so dark—
Mordious! You could not see beyond—

CHRISTIAN Your nose. *(Silence. Every man slowly rises to his feet. They look at Cyrano almost with terror. He has stopped short, utterly astonished. Pause)*

CYRANO Who is that man there?

A CADET *(In a low voice)* A recruit—arrived
This morning.

CYRANO *(Takes a step toward Christian)* A recruit—

CARBON *(In a low voice)* His name is Christian
De Neuvil—

CYRANO *(Suddenly motionless)* Oh . . . *(He turns pale, flushes, makes a movement as if to throw himself upon Christian)*

I— *(Controls himself, and goes on in a choking voice)*
I see. Very well,
As I was saying— *(With a sudden burst of rage)*
Mordious! . . . *(He goes on in a natural tone)*
It grew dark,
You could not see your hand before your eyes.

I marched on, thinking how, all for the sake
Of one old souse *(They slowly sit down, watching him)*
who wrote a bawdy song
Whenever he took—

CHRISTIAN A noseful— *(Everyone rises. Christian balances himself on two legs of his chair)*

CYRANO *(Half strangled)* —Took a notion . . .
Whenever he took a notion— For his sake,
I might antagonize some dangerous man,
One powerful enough to make me pay—

CHRISTIAN Through the nose—

CYRANO *(Wipes the sweat from his forehead)* —Pay the Piper. After all,
I thought, why am I putting in my—

CHRISTIAN Nose—

CYRANO —My oar . . . Why am I putting in my oar?
The quarrel's none of mine. However—now
I am here, I may as well go through with it.
Come, Gascon—do your duty!—Suddenly
A sword flashed in the dark. I caught it fair—

CHRISTIAN On the nose—

CYRANO On my blade. Before I knew it,
There I was—

CHRISTIAN Rubbing noses—

CYRANO *(Pale and smiling)* Crossing swords
With half a score at once. I handed one—

CHRISTIAN A nosegay—

CYRANO *(Leaping at him)* Ventre-Saint-Gris! . . . *(The Gascons tumble over each other to get a good view. Arrived in front of Christian, who has not moved an inch, Cyrano masters himself again, and continues)*

He went down;

The rest gave way; I charged—

CHRISTIAN Nose in the air—

CYRANO I skewered two of them—disarmed a third—

Another lunged— Paf! And I countered—

CHRISTIAN Pif!

CYRANO *(Bellowing)* Tonnerre! Out of here!—All of you! *(All the Cadets rush for the door)*

FIRST CADET At last—

The old lion wakes!

CYRANO All of you! Leave me here

Alone with that man! *(The lines following are heard brokenly, in the confusion of getting through the door)*

SECOND CADET Bigre! He'll have the fellow

Chopped into sausage—

RAGUENEAU Sausage?—

THIRD CADET Mince-meat, then—

One of your pies!—

RAGUENEAU Am I pale? You look white

As a fresh napkin—

CARBON *(At the door)* Come!

FOURTH CADET He'll never leave

Enough of him to—

FIFTH CADET Why, it frightens ME
To think of what will—

SIXTH CADET *(Closing the door)* Something horrible
Beyond imagination . . . *(They are all gone: some through the street door, some by the inner doors to right and left. A few disappear up the staircase. Cyrano and Christian stand face to face a moment, and look at each other)*

CYRANO To my arms!

CHRISTIAN Sir? . . .

CYRANO You have courage!

CHRISTIAN Oh, that! . . .

CYRANO You are brave—
That pleases me.

CHRISTIAN You mean? . . .

CYRANO Do you not know
I am her brother? Come!

CHRISTIAN Whose?—

CYRANO Hers—Roxane!

CHRISTIAN Her . . . brother? You? *(Hurries to him)*

CYRANO Her cousin. Much the same.

CHRISTIAN And she has told you? . . .

CYRANO Everything.

CHRISTIAN She loves me?

CYRANO Perhaps.

CHRISTIAN *(Takes both his hands)* My dear sir—more than I can say,
I am honored—

CYRANO This is rather sudden.

CHRISTIAN Please
Forgive me—

CYRANO *(Holds him at arms length, looking at him)* Why, he is a handsome devil,
This fellow!

CHRISTIAN On my honor—if you knew
How much I have admired—

CYRANO Yes, yes—and all
Those Noses which—

CHRISTIAN Please! I apologize.

CYRANO *(Change of tone)* Roxane expects a letter—

CHRISTIAN Not from me?—

CYRANO Yes. Why not?

CHRISTIAN Once I write, that ruins all!

CYRANO And why?

CHRISTIAN Because . . . because I am a fool!
Stupid enough to hang myself!

CYRANO But no—
You are no fool; you call yourself a fool,
There's proof enough in that. Besides, you did not
Attack me like a fool.

CHRISTIAN Bah! Any one
Can pick a quarrel. Yes, I have a sort
Of rough and ready soldier's tongue. I know
That. But with any woman—paralyzed,
Speechless, dumb. I can only look at them.
Yet sometimes, when I go away, their eyes . . .

CYRANO Why not their hearts, if you should wait and see?

CHRISTIAN No. I am one of those— I know—those men
Who never can make love.

CYRANO Strange. . . . Now it seems
I, if I gave my mind to it, I might
Perhaps make love well.

CHRISTIAN Oh, if I had words
To say what I have here!

CYRANO If I could be
A handsome little Musketeer with eyes!—

CHRISTIAN Besides—you know Roxane—how sensitive—
One rough word, and the sweet illusion—gone!

CYRANO I wish you might be my interpreter.

CHRISTIAN I wish I had your wit—

CYRANO Borrow it, then!—
Your beautiful young manhood—lend me that,
And we two make one hero of romance!

CHRISTIAN What?

CYRANO Would you dare repeat to her the words
I gave you, day by day?

CHRISTIAN You mean?

CYRANO I mean
Roxane shall have no disillusionment!
Come, shall we win her both together? Take
The soul within this leathern jack of mine,
And breathe it into you? *(Touches him on the breast)*

So—there's my heart
Under your velvet, now!

CHRISTIAN But— Cyrano!—

CYRANO But— Christian, why not?

CHRISTIAN I am afraid—

CYRANO I know—
Afraid that when you have her all alone,
You lose all. Have no fear. It is yourself
She loves—give her yourself put into words—
My words, upon your lips!

CHRISTIAN But . . . but your eyes! . . .
They burn like—

CYRANO Will you? . . . Will you?

CHRISTIAN Does it mean
So much to you?

CYRANO *(Beside himself)* It means— *(Recovers, changes tone)* A Comedy,
A situation for a poet! Come,
Shall we collaborate? I'll be your cloak
Of darkness, your enchanted sword, your ring
To charm the fairy Princess!

CHRISTIAN But the letter—
I cannot write—

CYRANO Oh yes, the letter. *(He takes from his pocket the letter which he has written)*
Here.

CHRISTIAN What is this?

CYRANO All there; all but the address.

CHRISTIAN I—

CYRANO Oh, you may send it. It will serve.

CHRISTIAN But why

Have you done this?

CYRANO I have amused myself

As we all do, we poets—writing vows
To Chloris, Phyllis—any pretty name—
You might have had a pocketful of them!
Take it, and turn to facts my fantasies—
I loosed these loves like doves into the air;
Give them a habitation and a home.
Here, take it— You will find me all the more
Eloquent, being insincere! Come!

CHRISTIAN First,

There must be a few changes here and there—
Written at random, can it fit Roxane?

CYRANO Like her own glove.

CHRISTIAN No, but—

CYRANO My son, have faith—
Faith in the love of women for themselves—
Roxane will know this letter for her own!

CHRISTIAN *(Throws himself into the arms of Cyrano. They stand embraced)*
My friend! *(The door up stage opens a little. A Cadet steals in)*

THE CADET Nothing. A silence like the tomb . . .
I hardly dare look— *(He sees the two)*
Wha-at? *(The other Cadets crowd in behind him and see)*

THE CADETS No!—No!

SECOND CADET Mon dieu!

THE MUSKETEER *(Slaps his knee)* Well, well, well!

CARBON Here's our devil . . . Christianized!

Offend one nostril, and he turns the other.

THE MUSKETEER Now we are allowed to talk about his nose! *(Calls)*

Hey, Lise! Come here— *(Affectedly)*

Snf! What a horrid smell!

What is it? . . . *(Plants himself in front of Cyrano, and looks at his nose in an impolite manner)*

You ought to know about such things;

What seems to have died around here?

CYRANO *(Knocks him backward over a bench)* Cabbage-heads! *(Joy. The Cadets have found their old Cyrano again. General disturbance)*

(CURTAIN)

THE THIRD ACT

ROXANE'S KISS

A LITTLE *square in the old Marais: old houses, and a glimpse of narrow streets. On the Right, The House of Roxane and her garden wall, overhung with tall shrubbery. Over the door of the house a balcony and a tall window; to one side of the door, a bench.*

Ivy clings to the wall; jasmine embraces the balcony, trembles, and falls away.

By the bench and the jutting stonework of the wall one might easily climb up to the balcony.

Opposite, an ancient house of the like character, brick and stone, whose front door forms an Entrance. The knocker on this door is tied up in linen like an injured thumb.

At the CURTAIN RISE *The Duenna is seated on the bench beside the door. The window is wide open on Roxane's balcony; a light within suggests that it is early evening. By The Duenna stands Ragueneau dressed in what might be the livery of one attached to the household. He is by way of telling her something, and wiping his eyes meanwhile.*

RAGUENEAU —And so she ran off with a Musketeer!
I was ruined— I was alone— Remained
Nothing for me to do but hang myself,
So I did that. Presently along comes
Monsieur de Bergerac, and cuts me down,
And makes me steward to his cousin.

THE DUENNA Ruined?—
I thought your pastry was a great success!

RAGUENEAU *(Shakes his head)* Lise loved the soldiers, and I loved the poets—
Mars ate up all the cakes Apollo left;
It did not take long. . . .

THE DUENNA *(Calls up to window)* Roxane! Are you ready?
We are late!

VOICE OF ROXANE *(Within)* Putting on my cape—

THE DUENNA *(To Ragueneau, indicating the house opposite)* Clomire
Across the way receives on Thursday nights—
We are to have a psycho-colloquy
Upon the Tender Passion.

RAGUENEAU Ah—the Tender . . .

THE DUENNA *(Sighs)* —Passion! . . . *(Calls up to window)*
Roxane!—Hurry, dear—we shall miss
The Tender Passion!

ROXANE Coming! — *(Music of stringed instruments off-stage approaching)*

THE VOICE OF CYRANO *(Singing)* La, la, la! —

THE DUENNA A serenade? — How pleasant —

CYRANO No, no, no! —

F natural, you natural born fool! *(Enters, followed by two pages, carrying theorbos)*

FIRST PAGE *(Ironically)* No doubt your honor knows F natural

When he hears —

CYRANO I am a musician, infant! —

A pupil of Gassendi.

THE PAGE *(Plays and sings)* La, la, —

CYRANO Here —

Give me that — *(He snatches the instrument from the Page and continues the tune)*

La, la, la, la —

ROXANE *(Appears on the Balcony)* Is that you

Cyrano?

CYRANO *(Singing)* I, who praise your lilies fair,

But long to love your ro . . . ses!

ROXANE I'll be down —

Wait — *(Goes in through window)*

THE DUENNA Did you train these virtuosi?

CYRANO No —

I won them on a bet from D'Assoucy.
We were debating a fine point of grammar
When, pointing out these two young nightingales
Dressed up like peacocks, with their instruments,
He cries: "No, but I KNOW! I'll wager you

A day of music." Well, of course he lost;
And so until to-morrow they are mine,
My private orchestra. Pleasant at first,
But they become a trifle— *(To the Pages)*
Here! Go play
A minuet to Montfleury—and tell him
I sent you! *(The Pages go up to the exit. Cyrano turns to the Duenna)*
I came here as usual
To inquire after our friend— *(To Pages)*
Play out of tune.
And keep on playing! *(The Pages go out. He turns to the Duenna)*
—Our friend with the great soul.

ROXANE *(Enters in time to hear the last words)*
He is beautiful and brilliant—and I love him!

CYRANO Do you find Christian . . . intellectual?

ROXANE More so than you, even.

CYRANO I am glad.

ROXANE No man
Ever so beautifully said those things—
Those pretty nothings that are everything.
Sometimes he falls into a reverie;
His inspiration fails—then all at once,
He will say something absolutely . . . Oh! . . .

CYRANO Really!

ROXANE How like a man! You think a man
Who has a handsome face must be a fool.

CYRANO He talks well about . . . matters of the heart?

ROXANE He does not *talk;* he rhapsodizes . . . dreams . . .

CYRANO *(Twisting his moustache)* He . . . writes well?

ROXANE Wonderfully. Listen now: *(Reciting as from memory)*

"Take my heart; I shall have it all the more;
Plucking the flowers, we keep the plant in bloom—"
Well?

CYRANO Pooh!

ROXANE And this:

"Knowing you have in store
More heart to give than I to find heart-room—"

CYRANO First he has too much, then too little; just
How much heart does he need?

ROXANE *(Tapping her foot)* You are teasing me!
You are jealous!

CYRANO *(Startled)* Jealous?

ROXANE Of his poetry—
You poets are like that . . .
And these last lines
Are they not the last word in tenderness?—
"There is no more to say: only believe
That unto you my whole heart gives one cry,
And writing, writes down more than you receive;
Sending you kisses through my finger-tips—
Lady, O read my letter with your lips!"

CYRANO H'm, yes—those last lines . . . but he overwrites!

ROXANE Listen to this—

CYRANO You know them all by heart?

ROXANE Every one!

CYRANO *(Twisting his moustache)* I may call that flattering . . .

ROXANE He is a master!

CYRANO Oh—come!

ROXANE Yes—a master!

CYRANO *(Bowing)* A master—if you will!

THE DUENNA *(Comes down stage quickly)* Monsieur de Guiche!— *(To Cyrano, pushing him toward the house)*

Go inside— If he does not find you here,

It may be just as well. He may suspect—

ROXANE —My secret! Yes; he is in love with me

And he is powerful. Let him not know—

One look would frost my roses before bloom.

CYRANO *(Going into house)* Very well, very well!

ROXANE *(To De Guiche, as he enters)* We were just going—

DE GUICHE I came only to say farewell.

ROXANE You leave

Paris?

DE GUICHE Yes—for the front.

ROXANE Ah!

DE GUICHE And to-night!

ROXANE Ah!

DE GUICHE We have orders to besiege Arras.

ROXANE Arras?

DE GUICHE Yes. My departure leaves you . . . cold?

ROXANE *(Politely)* Oh! Not that.

DE GUICHE It has left me desolate—

When shall I see you? Ever? Did you know

I was made Colonel?

ROXANE *(Indifferent)* Bravo.

DE GUICHE Regiment

Of the Guards.

ROXANE *(Catching her breath)* Of the Guards?—

DE GUICHE *His* regiment,

Your cousin, the mighty man of words!— *(Grimly)*

Down there

We may have an accounting!

ROXANE *(Suffocating)* Are you sure

The Guards are ordered?

DE GUICHE Under my command!

ROXANE *(Sinks down, breathless, on the bench; aside)* Christian!—

DE GUICHE What is it?

ROXANE *(Losing control of herself)* To the war—perhaps

Never again to— When a woman cares,

Is that nothing?

DE GUICHE *(Surprised and delighted)* You say this now—to me—

Now, at the very moment?—

ROXANE *(Recovers—changes her tone)* Tell me something:

My cousin— You say you mean to be revenged

On him. Do you mean that?

DE GUICHE *(Smiles)* Why? Would you care?

ROXANE Not for him.

DE GUICHE Do you see him?

ROXANE Now and then.

DE GUICHE He goes about everywhere nowadays
With one of the Cadets—de Neuve—Neuville—
Neuvillers—

ROXANE *(Coolly)* A tall man?—

DE GUICHE Blond—

ROXANE Rosy cheeks?—

DE GUICHE Handsome!—

ROXANE Pooh!—

DE GUICHE And a fool.

ROXANE *(Languidly)* So he appears . . . *(Animated)*
But Cyrano? What will you do to him?
Order him into danger? He loves that!
I know what *I* should do.

DE GUICHE What?

ROXANE Leave him here
With his Cadets, while all the regiment
Goes on to glory! That would torture him—
To sit all through the war with folded arms—
I know his nature. If you hate that man,
Strike at his self-esteem.

DE GUICHE Oh woman—woman!
Who but a woman would have thought of this?

ROXANE He'll eat his heart out, while his Gascon friends
Bite their nails all day long in Paris here.
And you will be avenged!

DE GUICHE You love me then,
A little? . . . *(She smiles)*
Making my enemies your own,
Hating them—I should like to see in that
A sign of love, Roxane.

ROXANE Perhaps it is one . . .

DE GUICHE *(Shows a number of folded despatches)*
Here are the orders—for each company—
Ready to send . . . *(Selects one)*
So— This is for the Guards—
I'll keep that. Aha, Cyrano! *(To Roxane)*
You too,
You play your little games, do you?

ROXANE *(Watching him)* Sometimes . . .

DE GUICHE *(Close to her, speaking hurriedly)* And you!—Oh, I am mad over you!—
Listen—
I leave to-night—but—let you through my hands
Now, when I feel you trembling?—Listen— Close by,
In the Rue d'Orléans, the Capuchins
Have their new convent. By their law, no layman
May pass inside those walls. I'll see to that—
Their sleeves are wide enough to cover me—
The servants of my Uncle-Cardinal

Will fear his nephew. So—I'll come to you
Masked, after everyone knows I have gone—
Oh, let me wait one day!—

ROXANE If this be known,
Your honor—

DE GUICHE Bah!

ROXANE The war—your duty—

DE GUICHE *(Blows away an imaginary feather)* Phoo!—
Only say yes!

ROXANE No!

DE GUICHE Whisper . . .

ROXANE *(Tenderly)* I ought not
To let you . . .

DE GUICHE Ah! . . .

ROXANE *(Pretends to break down)* Ah, go! *(Aside)*
—Christian remains— *(Aloud—heroically)*
I must have you a hero—Antoine . . .

DE GUICHE Heaven! . . .
So you can love—

ROXANE One for whose sake I fear.

DE GUICHE *(Triumphant)* I go!
Will that content you? *(Kisses her hand)*

ROXANE Yes—my friend! *(He goes out)*

THE DUENNA *(As De Guiche disappears, making a deep curtsey behind his back, and imitating Roxane's intense tone)*
Yes—my friend!

ROXANE *(Quickly, close to her)* Not a word to Cyrano—
He would never forgive me if he knew
I stole his war! *(She calls toward the house)*
Cousin! *(Cyrano comes out of the house; she turns to him, indicating the house opposite)*
We are going over—
Alcandre speaks to-night—and Lysimon.

THE DUENNA *(Puts finger in her ear)* My little finger says we shall not hear
Everything.

CYRANO Never mind me—

THE DUENNA *(Across the street)* Look— Oh, look!
The knocker tied up in a napkin— Yes,
They muzzled you because you bark too loud
And interrupt the lecture—little beast!

ROXANE *(As the door opens)* Enter . . . *(To Cyrano)*
If Christian comes, tell him to wait.

CYRANO Oh— *(Roxane returns)*
When he comes, what will you talk about?
You always know beforehand.

ROXANE About . . .

CYRANO Well?

ROXANE You will not tell him, will you?

CYRANO I am dumb.

ROXANE About nothing! Or about everything—
I shall say: "Speak of love in your own words—
Improvise! Rhapsodize! Be eloquent!"

CYRANO *(Smiling)* Good!

ROXANE Sh!—

CYRANO Sh!—

ROXANE Not a word! *(She goes in; the door closes)*

CYRANO *(Bowing)* Thank you so much—

ROXANE *(Opens door and puts out her head)* He must be unprepared—

CYRANO Of course!

ROXANE Sh!— *(Goes in again)*

CYRANO *(Calls)* Christian! *(Christian enters)*

I have your theme—bring on your memory!—
Here is your chance now to surpass yourself,
No time to lose— Come! Look intelligent—
Come home and learn your lines.

CHRISTIAN No.

CYRANO What?

CHRISTIAN I'll wait
Here for Roxane.

CYRANO What lunacy is this?
Come quickly!

CHRISTIAN No, I say! I have had enough—
Taking my words, my letters, all from you—
Making our love a little comedy!
It was a game at first; but now—she cares . . .
Thanks to you. I am not afraid. I'll speak
For myself now.

CYRANO Undoubtedly!

CHRISTIAN I will!

Why not? I am no such fool—you shall see!

Besides—my dear friend—you have taught me much;

I ought to know something . . . By God, I know

Enough to take a woman in my arms! *(Roxane appears in the doorway, opposite)*

There she is now . . . Cyrano, wait! Stay here!

CYRANO *(Bows)* Speak for yourself, my friend! *(He goes out)*

ROXANE *(Taking leave of the company)* —Barthénoïde!

Alcandre! . . . Grémione! . . .

THE DUENNA I told you so—

We missed the Tender Passion! *(She goes into Roxane's house)*

ROXANE Urimédonte!—

Adieu! *(As the guests disappear down the street, she turns to Christian)*

Is that you, Christian? Let us stay

Here, in the twilight. They are gone. The air

Is fragrant. We shall be alone. Sit down

There—so . . . *(They sit on the bench)*

Now tell me things.

CHRISTIAN *(After a silence)* I love you.

ROXANE *(Closes her eyes)* Yes,

Speak to me about love . . .

CHRISTIAN I love you.

ROXANE Now

Be eloquent! . . .

CHRISTIAN I love—

ROXANE *(Opens her eyes)* You have your theme—
Improvise! Rhapsodize!

CHRISTIAN I love you so!

ROXANE Of course. And then? . . .

CHRISTIAN And then . . . Oh, I should be
So happy if you loved me too! Roxane,
Say that you love me too!

ROXANE *(Making a face)* I ask for cream—
You give me milk and water. Tell me first
A little, how you love me.

CHRISTIAN Very much.

ROXANE Oh—tell me how you *feel!*

CHRISTIAN *(Coming nearer, and devouring her with his eyes)* Your throat . . . If only
I might . . . kiss it—

ROXANE Christian!

CHRISTIAN I love you so!

ROXANE *(Makes as if to rise)* Again?

CHRISTIAN *(Desperately, restraining her)* No, not again— I do not love you—

ROXANE *(Settles back)* That is better . . .

CHRISTIAN I adore you!

ROXANE Oh!— *(Rises and moves away)*

CHRISTIAN I know;
I grow absurd.

ROXANE *(Coldly)* And that displeases me
As much as if you had grown ugly.

CHRISTIAN I—

ROXANE Gather your dreams together into words!

CHRISTIAN I love—

ROXANE I know; you love me. Adieu. *(She goes to the house)*

CHRISTIAN No,

But wait—please—let me— I was going to say—

ROXANE *(Pushes the door open)* That you adore me. Yes; I know that too.

No! . . . Go away! . . . *(She goes in and shuts the door in his face)*

CHRISTIAN I . . . I . . .

CYRANO *(Enters)* A great success!

CHRISTIAN Help me!

CYRANO Not I.

CHRISTIAN I cannot live unless

She loves me—now, this moment!

CYRANO How the devil

Am I to teach you now—this moment!

CHRISTIAN *(Catches him by the arm)* —Wait!—

Look! Up there!—Quick— *(The light shows in Roxane's window)*

CYRANO Her window—

CHRISTIAN *(Wailing)* I shall die!—

CYRANO Less noise!

CHRISTIAN Oh, I—

CYRANO It does seem fairly dark—

CHRISTIAN *(Excitedly)* Well?—Well?—Well?—

CYRANO Let us try what can be done;

It is more than you deserve—stand over there,

Idiot—there!—before the balcony—

Let me stand underneath. I'll whisper you
What to say.

CHRISTIAN She may hear—she may—

CYRANO Less noise! *(The Pages appear up stage)*

FIRST PAGE Hep!—

CYRANO *(Finger to lips)* Sh!—

FIRST PAGE *(Low voice)* We serenaded Montfleury!—
What next?

CYRANO Down to the corner of the street—
One this way—and the other over there—
If anybody passes, play a tune!

PAGE What tune, O musical Philosopher?

CYRANO Sad for a man, or merry for a woman—
Now go! *(The Pages disappear, one toward each corner of the street)*

CYRANO *(To Christian)* Call her!

CHRISTIAN Roxane!

CYRANO Wait . . . *(Gathers up a handful of pebbles)*
Gravel . . . *(Throws it at the window)* There!—

ROXANE *(Opens the window)* Who is calling?

CHRISTIAN I—

ROXANE Who?

CHRISTIAN Christian.

ROXANE You again?

CHRISTIAN I had to tell you—

CYRANO *(Under the balcony)* Good— Keep your voice down.

ROXANE No. Go away. You tell me nothing.

CHRISTIAN Please!—

ROXANE You do not love me any more—

CHRISTIAN *(To whom Cyrano whispers his words)* No—no—
Not any more— I love you . . . evermore . . .
And ever . . . more and more!

ROXANE *(About to close the window—pauses)* A little better . . .

CHRISTIAN *(Same business)* Love grows and struggles like . . . an angry child . . .
Breaking my heart . . . his cradle . . .

ROXANE *(Coming out on the balcony)* Better still—
But . . . such a babe is dangerous; why not
Have smothered it new-born?

CHRISTIAN *(Same business)* And so I do . . .
And yet he lives . . . I found . . . as you shall find . . .
This new-born babe . . . an infant . . . Hercules!

ROXANE *(Further forward)* Good!—

CHRISTIAN *(Same business)* Strong enough . . . at birth . . . to strangle those
Two serpents—Doubt and . . . Pride.

ROXANE *(Leans over balcony)* Why, very well!
Tell me now why you speak so haltingly—
Has your imagination gone lame?

CYRANO *(Thrusts Christian under the balcony, and stands in his place)* Here—
This grows too difficult!

ROXANE Your words to-night
Hesitate. Why?

CYRANO *(In a low tone, imitating Christian)* Through the warm summer gloom
They grope in darkness toward the light of you.

ROXANE My words, well aimed, find you more readily.

CYRANO My heart is open wide and waits for them—
Too large a mark to miss! My words fly home,
Heavy with honey like returning bees,
To your small secret ear. Moreover—yours
Fall to me swiftly. Mine more slowly rise.

ROXANE Yet not so slowly as they did at first.

CYRANO They have learned the way, and you have welcomed them.

ROXANE *(Softly)* Am I so far above you now?

CYRANO So far—
If you let fall upon me one hard word,
Out of that height—you crush me!

ROXANE *(Turns)* I'll come down—

CYRANO *(Quickly)* No!

ROXANE *(Points out the bench under the balcony)*
Stand you on the bench. Come nearer!

CYRANO *(Recoils into the shadow)* No!—

ROXANE And why—so great a *No?*

CYRANO *(More and more overcome by emotion)* Let me enjoy
The one moment I ever—my one chance
To speak to you . . . unseen!

ROXANE Unseen!—

CYRANO Yes!—yes . . .
Night, making all things dimly beautiful,
One veil over us both— You only see
The darkness of a long cloak in the gloom,

And I the whiteness of a summer gown—
You are all light— I am all shadow! . . . How
Can you know what this moment means to me?
If I was ever eloquent—

ROXANE You were
Eloquent—

CYRANO —You have never heard till now
My own heart speaking!

ROXANE Why not?

CYRANO Until now,
I spoke through . . .

ROXANE Yes?—

CYRANO —through that sweet drunkenness
You pour into the world out of your eyes!
But to-night . . . but to-night, I indeed speak
For the first time!

ROXANE For the first time— Your voice,
Even, is not the same.

CYRANO *(Passionately; moves nearer)* How should it be?
I have another voice to-night—my own,
Myself, daring— *(He stops, confused; then tries to recover himself)*
Where was I? . . . I forget! . . .
Forgive me. This is all sweet like a dream . . .
Strange—like a dream . . .

ROXANE How, strange?

CYRANO Is it not so

To be myself to you, and have no fear
Of moving you to laughter?

ROXANE Laughter—why?

CYRANO *(Struggling for an explanation)* Because . . . What am I . . . What is any man,
That he dare ask for you? Therefore my heart
Hides behind phrases. There's a modesty
In these things too— I come here to pluck down
Out of the sky the evening star—then smile,
And stoop to gather little flowers.

ROXANE Are they
Not sweet, those little flowers?

CYRANO Not enough sweet
For you and me, to-night!

ROXANE *(Breathless)* You never spoke
To me like this . . .

CYRANO Little things, pretty things—
Arrows and hearts and torches—roses red,
And violets blue—are these all? Come away,
And breathe fresh air! Must we keep on and on
Sipping stale honey out of tiny cups
Decorated with golden tracery,
Drop by drop, all day long? We are alive;
We thirst— Come away, plunge, and drink, and drown
In the great river flowing to the sea!

ROXANE But . . . Poetry?

CYRANO I have made rimes for you—

Not now— Shall we insult Nature, this night,
These flowers, this moment—shall we set all these
To phrases from a letter by Voiture?
Look once at the high stars that shine in heaven,
And put off artificiality!
Have you not seen great gaudy hothouse flowers,
Barren, without fragrance?—Souls are like that:
Forced to show all, they soon become all show—
The means to Nature's end ends meaningless!

ROXANE But . . . Poetry?

CYRANO Love hates that game of words!
It is a crime to fence with life— I tell you,
There comes one moment, once—and God help those
Who pass that moment by!—when Beauty stands
Looking into the soul with grave, sweet eyes
That sicken at pretty words!

ROXANE If that be true—
And when that moment comes to you and me—
What words will you? . . .

CYRANO All those, all those, all those
That blossom in my heart, I'll fling to you—
Armfuls of loose bloom! Love, I love beyond
Breath, beyond reason, beyond love's own power
Of loving! Your name is like a golden bell
Hung in my heart; and when I think of you,
I tremble, and the bell swings and rings—

Roxane! . . .

Roxane! . . . along my veins, *Roxane!* . . .

I know

All small forgotten things that once meant You—

I remember last year, the First of May,

A little before noon, you had your hair

Drawn low, that one time only. Is that strange?

You know how, after looking at the sun,

One sees red suns everywhere—so, for hours

After the flood of sunshine that you are,

My eyes are blinded by your burning hair!

ROXANE *(Very low)* Yes . . . that is . . . Love—

CYRANO Yes, that is Love—that wind

Of terrible and jealous beauty, blowing

Over me—that dark fire, that music . . .

Yet

Love seeketh not his own! Dear, you may take

My happiness to make you happier,

Even though you never know I gave it you—

Only let me hear sometimes, all alone,

The distant laughter of your joy! . . .

I never

Look at you, but there's some new virtue born

In me, some new courage. Do you begin

To understand, a little? Can you feel

My soul, there in the darkness, breathe on you?

—Oh, but to-night, now, I dare say these things—
I . . . to you . . . and you hear them! . . . It is too much!
In my most sweet unreasonable dreams,
I have not hoped for this! Now let me die,
Having lived. It is my voice, mine, my own,
That makes you tremble there in the green gloom
Above me—for you do tremble, as a blossom
Among the leaves— You tremble, and I can feel,
All the way down along these jasmine branches,
Whether you will or no, the passion of you
Trembling . . . *(He kisses wildly the end of a drooping spray of jasmine)*

ROXANE Yes, I do tremble . . . and I weep . . .
And I love you . . . and I am yours . . . and you
Have made me thus!

CYRANO *(After a pause; quietly)* What is death like, I wonder?
I know everything else now . . .
I have done
This, to you—I, myself . . .
Only let me
Ask one thing more—

CHRISTIAN *(Under the balcony)* One kiss!

ROXANE *(Startled)* One?—

CYRANO *(To Christian)* You! . . .

ROXANE You ask me
For—

CYRANO I . . . Yes, but—I mean— *(To Christian)* You go too far!

CHRISTIAN She is willing!—Why not make the most of it?

CYRANO *(To Roxane)* I did ask . . . but I know I ask too much . . .

ROXANE Only one— Is that all?

CYRANO All!—How much more

Than all!—I know—I frighten you—I ask . . .

I ask you to refuse—

CHRISTIAN *(To Cyrano)* But why? Why? Why?

CYRANO Christian, be quiet!

ROXANE *(Leaning over)* What is that you say

To yourself?

CYRANO I am angry with myself

Because I go too far, and so I say

To myself: "Christian, be quiet!"— *(The theorbos begin to play)*

Hark—someone

Is coming— *(Roxane closes her window. Cyrano listens to the theorbos, one of which plays a gay melody, the other a mournful one)* A sad tune, a merry tune—

Man, woman—what do they mean?— *(A Capuchin enters; he carries a lantern, and goes from house to house, looking at the doors)*

Aha!—a priest! *(To the Capuchin)*

What is this new game of Diogenes?

THE CAPUCHIN I am looking for the house of Madame—

CHRISTIAN *(Impatient)* Bah!—

THE CAPUCHIN Magdeleine Robin—

CHRISTIAN What does he want?

CYRANO *(To the Capuchin; points out a street)* This way—

To the right—keep to the right—

THE CAPUCHIN I thank you, sir! —
I'll say my beads for you to the last grain.

CYRANO Good fortune, father, and my service to you! *(The Capuchin goes out)*

CHRISTIAN Win me that kiss!

CYRANO No.

CHRISTIAN Sooner or later—

CYRANO True . . .
That is true . . . Soon or late, it will be so
Because you are young and she is beautiful— *(To himself)*
Since it must be, I had rather be myself *(The window re-opens. Christian hides under the balcony)*
The cause of . . . what must be.

ROXANE *(Out on the balcony)* Are you still there?
We were speaking of—

CYRANO A kiss. The word is sweet—
What will the deed be? Are your lips afraid
Even of its burning name? Not much afraid—
Not too much! Have you not unwittingly
Laid aside laughter, slipping beyond speech
Insensibly, already, without fear,
From words to smiles . . . from smiles to sighs . . . from sighing,
Even to tears? One step more—only one—
From a tear to a kiss—one step, one thrill!

ROXANE Hush! —

CYRANO And what is a kiss, when all is done?
A promise given under seal—a vow

Taken before the shrine of memory—
A signature acknowledged—a rosy dot
Over the i of Loving—a secret whispered
To listening lips apart—a moment made
Immortal, with a rush of wings unseen—
A sacrament of blossoms, a new song
Sung by two hearts to an old simple tune—
The ring of one horizon around two souls
Together, all alone!

ROXANE Hush! . . .

CYRANO Why, what shame?—
There was a Queen of France, not long ago,
And a great lord of England—a queen's gift,
A crown jewel!—

ROXANE Indeed!

CYRANO Indeed, like him,
I have my sorrows and my silences;
Like her, you are the queen I dare adore;
Like him I am faithful and forlorn—

ROXANE Like him,
Beautiful—

CYRANO *(Aside)* So I am—I forgot that!

ROXANE Then— Come! . . . Gather your sacred blossom . . .

CYRANO *(To Christian)* Go!—

ROXANE Your crown jewel . . .

CYRANO Go on!—

ROXANE Your old new song . . .

CYRANO Climb! —

CHRISTIAN *(Hesitates)* No — Would you? — not yet —

ROXANE Your moment made
Immortal . . .

CYRANO *(Pushing him)* Climb up, animal! *(Christian springs on the bench, and climbs by the pillars, the branches, the vines, until he bestrides the balcony railing)*

CHRISTIAN Roxane! . . . *(He takes her in his arms and bends over her)*

CYRANO *(Very low)* Ah! . . . *Roxane!* . . .
I have won what I have won —
The feast of love — and I am Lazarus!
Yet . . . I have something here that is mine now
And was not mine before I spoke the words
That won her — not for me! . . . Kissing my words
My words, upon your lips! *(The theorbos begin to play)*
A merry tune —
A sad tune — So! The Capuchin! *(He pretends to be running, as if he had arrived from a distance; then calls up to the balcony)*
Hola!

ROXANE Who is it?

CYRANO I. Is Christian there with you?

CHRISTIAN *(Astonished)* Cyrano!

ROXANE Good morrow, Cousin!

CYRANO Cousin, . . . good morrow!

ROXANE I am coming down. *(She disappears into the house. The Capuchin enters up stage)*

CHRISTIAN *(Sees him)* Oh—again!

THE CAPUCHIN *(To Cyrano)* She lives *here*,
Magdeleine Robin!

CYRANO You said Ro-LIN.

THE CAPUCHIN No—
R-o-b-i-n.

ROXANE *(Appears on the threshold of the house, followed by Ragueneau with a lantern, and by Christian)* What is it?

THE CAPUCHIN A letter.

CHRISTIAN Oh! . . .

THE CAPUCHIN *(To Roxane)* Some matter profitable to the soul—
A very noble lord gave it to me!

ROXANE *(To Christian)* De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN He dares?—

ROXANE It will not be for long;
When he learns that I love you . . . *(By the light of the lantern which Ragueneau holds, she reads the letter in a low tone, as if to herself)*
"Mademoiselle
The drums are beating, and the regiment
Arms for the march. Secretly I remain
Here, in the Convent. I have disobeyed;
I shall be with you soon. I send this first
By an old monk, as simple as a sheep,
Who understands nothing of this. Your smile
Is more than I can bear, and seek no more.
Be alone to-night, waiting for one who dares

To hope you will forgive . . .—" etcetera— *(To the Capuchin)*
Father, this letter concerns you . . . *(To Christian)*
—and you.
Listen: *(The others gather around her. She pretends to read from the letter, aloud)*

"Mademoiselle:
The Cardinal
Will have his way, although against your will;
That is why I am sending this to you
By a most holy man, intelligent,
Discreet. You will communicate to him
Our order to perform, here and at once
The rite of . . . *(Turns the page)*
—Holy Matrimony. You
And Christian will be married privately
In your house. I have sent him to you. I know
You hesitate. Be resigned, nevertheless
To the Cardinal's command, who sends herewith
His blessing. Be assured also of my own
Respect and high consideration—*signed*,
Your very humble and—etcetera—"

THE CAPUCHIN A noble lord! I said so—never fear—
A worthy lord!—a very worthy lord!—

ROXANE *(To Christian)* Am I a good reader of letters?

CHRISTIAN *(Motions toward the Capuchin)* Careful!—

ROXANE *(In a tragic tone)* Oh, this is terrible!

THE CAPUCHIN *(Turns the light of his lantern on Cyrano)* You are to be—

CHRISTIAN *I* am the bridegroom!

THE CAPUCHIN *(Turns his lantern upon Christian; then, as if some suspicion crossed his mind, upon seeing the young man so handsome)* Oh—why, *you* . . .

ROXANE *(Quickly)* Look here—

"*Postscript:* Give to the Convent in my name
One hundred and twenty pistoles"—

THE CAPUCHIN Think of it!
A worthy lord—a very worthy lord! . . . *(To Roxane, solemnly)*
Daughter, resign yourself!

ROXANE *(With an air of martyrdom)* I am resigned . . . *(While Ragueneau opens the door for the Capuchin and Christian invites him to enter, she turns to Cyrano)*
De Guiche may come. Keep him out here with you
Do not let him—

CYRANO I understand! *(To the Capuchin)*
How long
Will you be?—

THE CAPUCHIN Oh, a quarter of an hour.

CYRANO *(Hurrying them into the house)* Hurry—I'll wait here—

ROXANE *(To Christian)* Come! *(They go into the house)*

CYRANO Now then, to make
His Grace delay that quarter of an hour . . .
I have it!—up here— *(He steps on the bench, and climbs up the wall toward the balcony. The theorbos begin to play a mournful melody)*
Sad music— Ah, a man! . . . *(The music pauses on a sinister tremolo)*
Oh—very much a man! *(He sits astride of the railing and, drawing*

toward him a long branch of one of the trees which border the garden wall, he grasps it with both hands, ready to swing himself down)

So—not too high— *(He peers down at the ground)*

I must float gently through the atmosphere—

DE GUICHE *(Enters, masked, groping in the dark toward the house)*

Where is that cursed, bleating Capuchin?

CYRANO What if he knows my voice?—the devil!—Tic-tac,

Bergerac—we unlock our Gascon tongue;

A good strong accent—

DE GUICHE Here is the house—all dark—

Damn this mask!— *(As he is about to enter the house, Cyrano leaps from the balcony, still holding fast to the branch, which bends and swings him between De Guiche and the door; then he releases the branch and pretends to fall heavily as though from a height. He lands flatlong on the ground, where he lies motionless, as if stunned. De Guiche leaps back)*

What is that? *(When he lifts his eyes, the branch has sprung back into place. He can see nothing but the sky; he does not understand)* Why . . . where did this man

Fall from?

CYRANO *(Sits up, and speaks with a strong accent)* —The moon!

DE GUICHE You—

CYRANO From the moon, the moon!

I fell out of the moon!

DE GUICHE The fellow is mad—

CYRANO *(Dreamily)* Where am I?

DE GUICHE Why—

CYRANO What time is it? What place

Is this? What day? What season?

DE GUICHE You—

CYRANO I am stunned!

DE GUICHE My dear sir—

CYRANO Like a bomb—a bomb—I fell
From the moon!

DE GUICHE Now, see here—

CYRANO *(Rising to his feet, and speaking in a terrible voice)* I say, the moon!

DE GUICHE *(Recoils)* Very well—if you say so— *(Aside)*
Raving mad!—

CYRANO *(Advancing upon him)* I am not speaking metaphorically!

DE GUICHE Pardon.

CYRANO A hundred years—an hour ago—
I really cannot say how long I fell—
I was in yonder shining sphere—

DE GUICHE *(Shrugs)* Quite so.
Please let me pass.

CYRANO *(Interposes himself)* Where am I? Tell the truth—
I can bear it. In what quarter of the globe
Have I descended like a meteorite?

DE GUICHE Morbleu!

CYRANO I could not choose my place to fall—
The earth spun round so fast— Was it the Earth,
I wonder?—Or is this another world?
Another moon? Whither have I been drawn
By the dead weight of my posterior?

DE GUICHE Sir, I repeat—

CYRANO *(With a sudden cry, which causes De Guiche to recoil again)*

His face! My God—black!

DE GUICHE *(Carries his hand to his mask)* Oh!—

CYRANO *(Terrified)* Are you a native? Is this Africa?

DE GUICHE —This mask!

CYRANO *(Somewhat reassured)* Are we in Venice? Genoa?

DE GUICHE *(Tries to pass him)* A lady is waiting for me.

CYRANO *(Quite happy again)* So this is Paris!

DE GUICHE *(Smiling in spite of himself)* This fool becomes amusing.

CYRANO Ah! You smile?

DE GUICHE I do. Kindly permit me—

CYRANO *(Delighted)* Dear old Paris—

Well, well!— *(Wholly at his ease, smiles, bows, arranges his dress)*
Excuse my appearance. I arrive
By the last thunderbolt—a trifle singed
As I came through the ether. These long journeys—
You know! There are so few conveniences!
My eyes are full of star-dust. On my spurs,
Some sort of fur . . . Planet's apparently . . . *(Plucks something from his sleeve)*
Look—on my doublet— That's a Comet's hair! *(He blows something from the back of his hand)* Phoo!

DE GUICHE *(Grows angry)* Monsieur—

CYRANO *(As De Guiche is about to push past, thrusts his leg in the way)*

Here's a tooth, stuck in my boot,
From the Great Bear. Trying to get away,

I tripped over the Scorpion and came down
Slap, into one scale of the Balances—
The pointer marks my weight this moment . . . *(Pointing upward)*
See? *(De Guiche makes a sudden movement. Cyrano catches his arm)*
Be careful! If you struck me on the nose,
It would drip milk!

DE GUICHE Milk?

CYRANO From the Milky Way!

DE GUICHE Hell!

CYRANO No, no—Heaven *(Crossing his arms)* Curious place up there—
Did you know Sirius wore a nightcap? True! *(Confidentially)*
The Little Bear is still too young to bite. *(Laughing)*
My foot caught in the Lyre, and broke a string. *(Proudly)*
Well—when I write my book, and tell the tale
Of my adventures—all these little stars
That shake out of my cloak—I must save those
To use for asterisks!

DE GUICHE That will do now—
I wish—

CYRANO Yes, yes—I know—

DE GUICHE Sir—

CYRANO You desire
To learn from my own lips the character
Of the moon's surface—its inhabitants
If any—

DE GUICHE *(Loses patience and shouts)* I desire no such thing! I—

CYRANO *(Rapidly)* You wish to know by what mysterious means
I reached the moon? — well — confidentially —
It was a new invention of my own.

DE GUICHE *(Discouraged)* Drunk too — as well as mad!

CYRANO I scorned the eagle
Of Regiomontanus, and the dove
Of Archytas!

DE GUICHE A learned lunatic! —

CYRANO I imitated no one. I myself
Discovered not one scheme merely, but six —
Six ways to violate the virgin sky! *(De Guiche has succeeded in passing him, and moves toward the door of Roxane's house. Cyrano follows, ready to use violence if necessary)*

DE GUICHE *(Looks around)* Six?

CYRANO *(With increasing volubility)* As for instance — Having stripped myself
Bare as a wax candle, adorn my form
With crystal vials filled with morning dew,
And so be drawn aloft, as the sun rises
Drinking the mist of dawn!

DE GUICHE *(Takes a step toward Cyrano)* Yes — that makes one.

CYRANO *(Draws back to lead him away from the door; speaks faster and faster)*
Or, sealing up the air in a cedar chest,
Rarefy it by means of mirrors, placed
In an icosahedron.

DE GUICHE *(Takes another step)* Two.

CYRANO *(Still retreating)* Again,
I might construct a rocket, in the form

Of a huge locust, driven by impulses
Of villainous saltpetre from the rear,
Upward, by leaps and bounds.

DE GUICHE *(Interested in spite of himself, and counting on his fingers)* Three.

CYRANO *(Same business)* Or again,
Smoke having a natural tendency to rise,
Blow in a globe enough to raise me.

DE GUICHE *(Same business, more and more astonished)* Four!

CYRANO Or since Diana, as old fables tell,
Draws forth to fill her crescent horn, the marrow
Of bulls and goats—to anoint myself therewith.

DE GUICHE *(Hypnotized)* Five!—

CYRANO *(Has by this time led him all the way across the street, close to a bench)*
Finally—seated on an iron plate,
To hurl a magnet in the air—the iron
Follows—I catch the magnet—throw again—
And so proceed indefinitely.

DE GUICHE Six!—
All excellent,—and which did you adopt?

CYRANO *(Coolly)* Why, none of them. . . . A seventh.

DE GUICHE Which was?—

CYRANO Guess!—

DE GUICHE An interesting idiot, this!

CYRANO *(Imitates the sound of waves with his voice, and their movement by large, vague gestures)* Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . .

DE GUICHE Well?

CYRANO Have you guessed it yet?

DE GUICHE Why, no.

CYRANO *(Grandiloquent)* The ocean! . . .

What hour its rising tide seeks the full moon,
I laid me on the strand, fresh from the spray,
My head fronting the moonbeams, since the hair
Retains moisture—and so I slowly rose
As upon angels' wings, effortlessly,
Upward—then suddenly I felt a shock!—
And then . . .

DE GUICHE *(Overcome by curiosity, sits down on the bench)* And then?

CYRANO And then— *(Changes abruptly to his natural voice)*

The time is up!—
Fifteen minutes, your Grace!—You are now free;
And—they are bound—in wedlock.

DE GUICHE *(Leaping up)* Am *I* drunk?
That voice . . . *(The door of Roxane's house opens; lackeys appear, bearing lighted candles.* LIGHTS UP. *Cyrano removes his hat)* And that nose!—Cyrano!

CYRANO *(Saluting)* Cyrano! . . .
This very moment, they have exchanged rings.

DE GUICHE Who? *(He turns up stage.* TABLEAU: *between the lackeys, Roxane and Christian appear, hand in hand. The Capuchin follows them, smiling. Ragueneau holds aloft a torch. The Duenna brings up the rear, in a negligée, and a pleasant flutter of emotion)* Zounds! *(To Roxane)*

You?— *(Recognizes Christian)*
He?— *(Saluting Roxane)*

My sincere compliments! *(To Cyrano)*
You also, my inventor of machines!
Your rigmarole would have detained a saint
Entering Paradise—decidedly
You must not fail to write that book some day!

CYRANO *(Bowing)* Sir, I engage myself to do so.

THE CAPUCHIN *(Leads the bridal pair down to De Guiche and strokes with great satisfaction his long white beard)* My lord,
The handsome couple you—and God—have joined
Together!

DE GUICHE *(Regarding him with a frosty eye)* Quite so. *(Turns to Roxane)*
Madame, kindly bid
Your . . . husband farewell.

ROXANE Oh!—

DE GUICHE *(To Christian)* Your regiment
Leaves to-night, sir. Report at once!

ROXANE You mean
For the front? The war?

DE GUICHE Certainly!

ROXANE I thought
The Cadets were not going—

DE GUICHE Oh yes, they are! *(Taking out the despatch from his pocket)*
Here is the order— *(To Christian)* Baron! Deliver this.

ROXANE *(Throws herself into Christian's arms)* Christian!

DE GUICHE *(To Cyrano, sneering)* The bridal night is not so near!

CYRANO *(Aside)* Somehow that news fails to disquiet me.

CHRISTIAN *(To Roxane)* Your lips again . . .

CYRANO There . . . That will do now— Come!

CHRISTIAN *(Still holding Roxane)* You do not know how hard it is—

CYRANO *(Tries to drag him away)* I know! *(The beating of drums is heard in the distance)*

DE GUICHE *(Up stage)* The regiment—on the march!

ROXANE *(As Cyrano tries to lead Christian away, follows, and detains them)*

Take care of him
For me— *(Appealingly)*
Promise me never to let him do
Anything dangerous!

CYRANO I'll do my best—
I cannot promise—

ROXANE *(Same business)* Make him be careful!

CYRANO Yes—
I'll try—

ROXANE *(Same business)* Be sure you keep him dry and warm!

CYRANO Yes, yes—if possible—

ROXANE *(Same business; confidentially, in his ear)* See that he remains
Faithful!—

CYRANO Of course! If—

ROXANE *(Same business)* And have him write to me
Every single day!

CYRANO *(Stops)* That, I promise you!

(CURTAIN)

THE FOURTH ACT

THE CADETS OF GASCOYNE

THE *Post occupied by the Company of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux at The Siege of Arras.*

In the background, a Rampart traversing the entire scene; beyond this, and apparently below, a Plain stretches away to the horizon. The country is cut up with earthworks and other suggestions of the siege. In the distance, against the sky-line, the houses and the walls of Arras.

Tents; scattered Weapons; Drums, et cetera. It is near day-break, and the East is yellow with approaching dawn. Sentries at intervals. Camp-fires.

CURTAIN RISE *discovers the Cadets asleep, rolled in their cloaks. Carbon de Castel-Jaloux and Le Bret keep watch. They are both very thin and pale. Christian is asleep among the others, wrapped in his cloak, in the foreground, his face lighted by the flickering fire. Silence.*

LE BRET Horrible!

CARBON Why, yes. All of that.

LE BRET Mordious!

CARBON *(Gesture toward the sleeping Cadets)*

Swear gently— You might wake them. *(To Cadets)*

Go to sleep—

Hush! *(To Le Bret)*

Who sleeps dines.

LE BRET I have insomnia.

God! What a famine. *(Firing off stage)*

CARBON Curse that musketry!

They'll wake my babies. *(To the men)*

Go to sleep!—

A CADET *(Rouses)* Diantre!

Again?

CARBON No—only Cyrano coming home. *(The heads which have been raised sink back again)*

A SENTRY *(Off stage)* Halt! Who goes there?

VOICE OF CYRANO Bergerac!

THE SENTRY ON THE PARAPET Halt! Who goes?—

CYRANO *(Appears on the parapet)* Bergerac, idiot!

LE BRET *(Goes to meet him)* Thank God again!

CYRANO *(Signs to him not to wake anyone)* Hush!

LE BRET Wounded?—

CYRANO No— They always miss me—quite
A habit by this time!

LE BRET Yes— Go right on—
Risk your life every morning before breakfast
To send a letter!

CYRANO *(Stops near Christian)* I promised he should write
Every single day . . . *(Looks down at him)*
Hm— The boy looks pale
When he is asleep—thin too—starving to death—
If that poor child knew! Handsome, none the less . . .

LE BRET Go and get some sleep!

CYRANO *(Affectionately)* Now, now—you old bear,
No growling!—I am careful—you know I am—
Every night, when I cross the Spanish lines
I wait till they are all drunk.

LE BRET You might bring
Something with you.

CYRANO I have to travel light
To pass through— By the way, there will be news
For you to-day: the French will eat or die,
If what I saw means anything.

LE BRET Tell us!

CYRANO No—
I am not sure—we shall see!

CARBON What a war,
When the besieger starves to death!

LE BRET Fine war—
Fine situation! We besiege Arras—
The Cardinal Prince of Spain besieges us—
And—here we are!

CYRANO Someone might besiege *him.*

CARBON A hungry joke!

CYRANO Ho, ho!

LE BRET Yes, you can laugh—
Risking a life like yours to carry letters—
Where are you going now?

CYRANO *(At the tent door)* To write another. *(Goes into tent)*

(A little more daylight. The clouds redden. The town of Arras shows on the horizon. A cannon shot is heard, followed immediately by a roll of drums, far away to the left. Other drums beat a little nearer. The drums go on answering each other here and there, approach, beat loudly almost on the stage, and die away toward the right, across the camp. The camp awakes. Voices of officers in the distance)

CARBON *(Sighs)* Those drums!—another good nourishing sleep
Gone to the devil. *(The Cadets rouse themselves)*
Now then!—

FIRST CADET *(Sits up, yawns)* God! I'm hungry!

SECOND CADET Starving!

ALL *(Groan)* Aoh!

CARBON Up with you!

THIRD CADET Not another step!

FOURTH CADET Not another movement!

FIRST CADET Look at my tongue—
I said this air was indigestible!

FIFTH CADET My coronet for half a pound of cheese!

SIXTH CADET I have no stomach for this war— I'll stay
In my tent—like Achilles.

ANOTHER Yes—no bread,
No fighting—

CARBON Cyrano!

OTHERS May as well die—

CARBON Come out here!—You know how to talk to them.
Get them laughing—

SECOND CADET *(Rushes up to First Cadet who is eating something)*
What are you gnawing there?

FIRST CADET Gun wads and axle-grease. Fat country this.
Around Arras.

ANOTHER *(Enters)* I have been out hunting!

ANOTHER *(Enters)* I
Went fishing, in the Scarpe!

ALL *(Leaping up and surrounding the newcomers)* Find anything?
Any fish? Any game? Perch? Partridges?
Let me look!

THE FISHERMAN Yes—one gudgeon. *(Shows it)*

THE HUNTER One fat . . . sparrow. *(Shows it)*

ALL Ah!—See here, this—mutiny!—

CARBON Cyrano!
Come and help!

CYRANO *(Enters from tent)* Well? *(Silence. To the First Cadet who is walking away, with his chin on his chest)* You there, with the long face?

FIRST CADET I have something on my mind that troubles me.

CYRANO What is that?

FIRST CADET My stomach.

CYRANO So have I.

FIRST CADET No doubt
You enjoy this!

CYRANO *(Tightens his belt)* It keeps me looking young.

SECOND CADET My teeth are growing rusty.

CYRANO Sharpen them!

THIRD CADET My belly sounds as hollow as a drum.

CYRANO Beat the long roll on it!

FOURTH CADET My ears are ringing.

CYRANO Liar! A hungry belly has no ears.

FIFTH CADET Oh for a barrel of good wine!

CYRANO *(Offers him his own helmet)* Your casque.

SIXTH CADET I'll swallow anything!

CYRANO *(Throws him the book which he has in his hand)* Try the *Iliad*.

SEVENTH CADET The Cardinal, he has four meals a day—
What does he care!

CYRANO Ask him; he really ought
To send you . . . a spring lamb out of his flock,
Roasted whole—

THE CADET Yes, and a bottle—

CYRANO *(Exaggerates the manner of one speaking to a servant)* If you please,
Richelieu—a little more of the Red Seal . . .
Ah, thank you!

THE CADET And the salad—

CYRANO Of course—Romaine!

ANOTHER CADET *(Shivering)* I am as hungry as a wolf.

CYRANO *(Tosses him a cloak)* Put on
Your sheep's clothing.

FIRST CADET *(With a shrug)* Always the clever answer!

CYRANO Always the answer—yes! Let me die so—
Under some rosy-golden sunset, saying
A good thing, for a good cause! By the sword,
The point of honor—by the hand of one
Worthy to be my foeman, let me fall—
Steel in my heart, and laughter on my lips!

VOICES HERE AND THERE All very well— We are hungry!

CYRANO Bah! You think
Of nothing but yourselves. *(His eye singles out the old fifer in the background)* Here, Bertrandou,
You were a shepherd once— Your pipe now! Come,
Breathe, blow— Play to these belly-worshippers
The old airs of the South—
Airs with a smile in them,
Airs with a sigh in them, airs with the breeze
And the blue of the sky in them—

Small, demure tunes
Whose every note is like a little sister—
Songs heard only in some long silent voice
Not quite forgotten— Mountain melodies
Like thin smoke rising from brown cottages
In the still noon, slowly— Quaint lullabies,
Whose very music has a Southern tongue— *(The old man sits down and prepares his fife)*
Now let the fife, that dry old warrior,
Dream, while over the stops your fingers dance
A minuet of little birds—let him
Dream beyond ebony and ivory;
Let him remember he was once a reed
Out of the river, and recall the spirit
Of innocent, untroubled country days . . . *(The fifer begins to play a Provençal melody)*
Listen, you Gascons! Now it is no more
The shrill fife— It is the flute, through woodlands far
Away, calling—no longer the hot battle-cry,
But the cool, quiet pipe our goatherds play!
Listen—the forest glens . . . the hills . . . the downs . . .
The green sweetness of night on the Dordogne . . .
Listen, you Gascons! It is all Gascoyne! . . . *(Every head is bowed; every eye cast down. Here and there a tear is furtively brushed away with the back of a hand, the corner of a cloak)*

CARBON *(Softly to Cyrano)* You make them weep—

CYRANO For homesickness—a hunger
More noble than that hunger of the flesh;
It is their hearts now that are starving.

CARBON Yes,
But you melt down their manhood.

CYRANO *(Motions the drummer to approach)* You think so?
Let them be. There is iron in their blood
Not easily dissolved in tears. You need
Only— *(He makes a gesture; the drum beats)*

ALL *(Spring up and rush toward their weapons)*
What's that? Where is it?—What?—

CYRANO *(Smiles)* You see—
Let Mars snore in his sleep once—and farewell
Venus—sweet dreams—regrets—dear thoughts of home—
All the fife lulls to rest wakes at the drums!

A CADET *(Looks up stage)* Aha— Monsieur de Guiche!

THE CADETS *(Mutter among themselves)* Ugh! . . .

CYRANO *(Smiles)* Flattering
Murmur!

A CADET He makes me weary!

ANOTHER With his collar
Of lace over his corselet—

ANOTHER Like a ribbon
Tied round a sword!

ANOTHER Bandages for a boil
On the back of his neck—

SECOND CADET A courtier always!

ANOTHER The Cardinal's nephew!

None the less—a Gascon.

FIRST CADET A counterfeit! Never you trust that man—

Because we Gascons, look you, are all mad—

This fellow is reasonable—nothing more

Dangerous than a reasonable Gascon!

LE BRET He looks pale.

ANOTHER Oh, he can be hungry too,

Like any other poor devil—but he wears

So many jewels on that belt of his

That his cramps glitter in the sun!

CYRANO *(Quickly)* Is he

To see us looking miserable? Quick—

Pipes!—Cards!—Dice!— *(They all hurriedly begin to play, on their stools, on the drums, or on their cloaks spread on the ground, lighting their long pipes meanwhile)*

As for me, I read Descartes.

(He walks up and down, reading a small book which he takes from his pocket. TABLEAU: *De Guiche enters, looking pale and haggard. All are absorbed in their games. General air of contentment. De Guiche goes to Carbon. They look at each other askance, each observing with satisfaction the condition of the other)*

DE GUICHE Good morning! *(Aside)*

He looks yellow.

CARBON *(Same business)* He is all eyes.

DE GUICHE *(Looks at the Cadets)*

What have we here? Black looks? Yes, gentlemen—
I am informed I am not popular;
The hill-nobility, barons of Béarn,
The pomp and pride of Périgord—I learn
They disapprove their colonel; call him courtier,
Politician—they take it ill that I
Cover my steel with lace of Genoa.
It is a great offense to be a Gascon
And not to be a beggar! *(Silence. They smoke. They play)*
Well— Shall I have
Your captain punish you? . . . No.

CARBON As to that,
It would be impossible.

DE GUICHE Oh?

CARBON I am free;
I pay my company; it is my own;
I obey military orders.

DE GUICHE Oh!
That will be quite enough. *(To the Cadets)*
I can afford
Your little hates. My conduct under fire
Is well known. It was only yesterday
I drove the Count de Bucquoi from Bapaume,
Pouring my men down like an avalanche,
I myself led the charge—

CYRANO *(Without looking up from his book)* And your white scarf?

DE GUICHE *(Surprised and gratified)* You heard that episode? Yes—rallying
My men for the third time, I found myself
Carried among a crowd of fugitives
Into the enemy's lines. I was in danger
Of being shot or captured; but I thought
Quickly—took off and flung away the scarf
That marked my military rank—and so
Being inconspicuous, escaped among
My own force, rallied them, returned again
And won the day! . . . *(The Cadets do not appear to be listening, but here and there the cards and the dice boxes remain motionless, the smoke is retained in their cheeks)* What do you say to that?
Presence of mind—yes?

CYRANO Henry of Navarre
Being outnumbered, never flung away
His white plume. *(Silent enjoyment. The cards flutter, the dice roll, the smoke puffs out)*

DE GUICHE My device was a success,
However! *(Same attentive pause, interrupting the games and the smoking)*

CYRANO Possibly . . . An officer
Does not lightly resign the privilege
Of being a target. *(Cards, dice, and smoke fall, roll, and float away with increasing satisfaction)* Now, if I had been there—
Your courage and my own differ in this—
When your scarf fell, I should have put it on.

DE GUICHE Boasting again!

CYRANO Boasting? Lend it to me
To-night; I'll lead the first charge, with your scarf
Over my shoulder!

DE GUICHE Gasconnade once more!
You are safe making that offer, and you know it—
My scarf lies on the river bank between
The lines, a spot swept by artillery
Impossible to reach alive!

CYRANO *(Produces the scarf from his pocket)* Yes. Here . . . *(Silence. The Cadets stifle their laughter behind their cards and their dice boxes. De Guiche turns to look at them. Immediately they resume their gravity and their game. One of them whistles carelessly the mountain air which the fifer was playing)*

DE GUICHE *(Takes the scarf)* Thank you! That bit of white is what I need
To make a signal. I was hesitating—
You have decided me. *(He goes up to the parapet, climbs upon it, and waves the scarf at arm's length several times)*

ALL What is he doing?—
What?—

THE SENTRY ON THE PARAPET There's a man down there running away!

DE GUICHE *(Descending)* A Spaniard. Very useful as a spy
To both sides. He informs the enemy
As I instruct him. By his influence
I can arrange their dispositions.

CYRANO Traitor!

DE GUICHE *(Folding the scarf)* A traitor, yes; but useful . . .
We were saying? . . .

Oh, yes— Here is a bit of news for you:
Last night we had hopes of reprovisioning
The army. Under cover of the dark,
The Marshal moved to Dourlens. Our supplies
Are there. He may reach them. But to return
Safely, he needs a large force—at least half
Our entire strength. At present, we have here
Merely a skeleton.

CARBON Fortunately,
The Spaniards do not know that.

DE GUICHE Oh, yes; they know.
They will attack.

CARBON Ah!

DE GUICHE From that spy of mine
I learned of their intention. His report
Will determine the point of their advance.
The fellow asked me what to say! I told him:
"Go out between the lines; watch for my signal;
Where you see that, let them attack there."

CARBON *(To the Cadets)* Well,
Gentlemen! *(All rise. Noise of sword belts and breastplates being buckled on)*

DE GUICHE You may have perhaps an hour.

FIRST CADET Oh— An hour! *(They all sit down and resume their games once more)*

DE GUICHE *(To Carbon)* The great thing is to gain time.
Any moment the Marshal may return.

CARBON And to gain time?

DE GUICHE You will all be so kind
As to lay down your lives!

CYRANO Ah! Your revenge?

DE GUICHE I make no great pretense of loving you!
But—since you gentlemen esteem yourselves
Invincible, the bravest of the brave,
And all that—why need we be personal?
I serve the king in choosing . . . as I choose!

CYRANO *(Salutes)* Sir, permit me to offer—all our thanks.

DE GUICHE *(Returns the salute)* You love to fight a hundred against one;
Here is your opportunity! *(He goes up stage with Carbon)*

CYRANO *(To the Cadets)* My friends,
We shall add now to our old Gascon arms
With their six chevrons, blue and gold, a seventh—
Blood-red! *(De Guiche talks in a low tone to Carbon up stage. Orders are given. The defense is arranged. Cyrano goes to Christian who has remained motionless with folded arms)*
Christian? *(Lays a hand on his shoulder)*

CHRISTIAN *(Shakes his head)* Roxane . . .

CYRANO Yes.

CHRISTIAN I should like
To say farewell to her, with my whole heart
Written for her to keep.

CYRANO I thought of that— *(Takes a letter from his doublet)*
I have written your farewell.

CHRISTIAN Show me!

CYRANO You wish
To read it?

CHRISTIAN Of course! *(He takes the letter; begins to read, looks up suddenly)*
What?—

CYRANO What is it?

CHRISTIAN Look—
This little circle—

CYRANO *(Takes back the letter quickly, and looks innocent)* Circle?—

CHRISTIAN Yes—a tear!

CYRANO So it is! . . . Well—a poet while he writes
Is like a lover in his lady's arms,
Believing his imagination—all
Seems true—you understand? There's half the charm
Of writing— Now, this letter as you see
I have made so pathetic that I wept
While I was writing it!

CHRISTIAN You—wept?

CYRANO Why, yes—
Because . . . it is a little thing to die,
But—not to see her . . . that is terrible!
And I shall never— *(Christian looks at him)*
We shall never— *(Quickly)*
You
Will never—

CHRISTIAN *(Snatches the letter)* Give me that! *(Noise in the distance on the outskirts of the camp)*

VOICE OF A SENTRY Halt—who goes there? *(Shots, shouting, jingle of harness)*

CARBON What is it?—

THE SENTRY ON THE PARAPET Why, a coach *(They rush to look)*

CONFUSED VOICES What? In the Camp?

A coach? Coming this way— It must have driven

Through the Spanish lines—what the devil— Fire!—

No— Hark! The driver shouting—what does he say?

Wait— He said: "On the service of the King!" *(They are all on the parapet looking over. The jingling comes nearer)*

DE GUICHE Of the King? *(They come down and fall into line)*

CARBON Hats off, all!

DE GUICHE *(Speaks off stage)* The King! Fall in,

Rascals!— *(The coach enters at full trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are drawn. Two footmen are seated behind. It stops suddenly)*

CARBON *(Shouts)* Beat the assembly— *(Roll of drums. All the Cadets uncover)*

DE GUICHE Two of you,

Lower the steps—open the door— *(Two men rush to the coach. The door opens)*

ROXANE *(Comes out of the coach)* Good morning! *(At the sound of a woman's voice, every head is raised. Sensation)*

DE GUICHE On the King's service— You?

ROXANE Yes—my own king—

Love!

CYRANO *(Aside)* God is merciful . . .

CHRISTIAN *(Hastens to her)* You! Why have you—

ROXANE Your war lasted so long!

CHRISTIAN But why?—

ROXANE Not now—

CYRANO *(Aside)* I wonder if I dare to look at her . . .

DE GUICHE You cannot remain here!

ROXANE Why, certainly!

Roll that drum here, somebody . . . *(She sits on the drum, which is brought to her)*

Thank you— There! *(She laughs)*

Would you believe—they fired upon us?

—My coach

Looks like the pumpkin in the fairy tale,

Does it not? And my footmen— *(She throws a kiss to Christian)*

How do you do? *(She looks about)*

How serious you all are! Do you know,

It is a long drive here—from Arras? *(Sees Cyrano)*

Cousin,

I am glad to see you!

CYRANO *(Advances)* Oh— How did you come?

ROXANE How did I find you? Very easily—

I followed where the country was laid waste

—Oh, but I saw such things! I had to see

To believe. Gentlemen, is that the service

Of your King? I prefer my own!

CYRANO But how

Did you come through?

ROXANE Why, through the Spanish lines

Of course!

FIRST CADET They let you pass? —

DE GUICHE What did you say?

How did you manage?

LE BRET Yes, that must have been

Difficult!

ROXANE No— I simply drove along.

Now and then some hidalgo scowled at me

And I smiled back—my best smile; whereupon,

The Spaniards being (without prejudice

To the French) the most polished gentlemen

In the world—I passed!

CARBON Certainly that smile

Should be a passport! Did they never ask

Your errand or your destination?

ROXANE Oh,

Frequently! Then I drooped my eyes and said:

"I have a lover . . ." Whereupon, the Spaniard

With an air of ferocious dignity

Would close the carriage door—with such a gesture

As any king might envy, wave aside

The muskets that were leveled at my breast,

Fall back three paces, equally superb

In grace and gloom, draw himself up, thrust forth

A spur under his cloak, sweeping the air

With his long plumes, bow very low, and say:

"Pass, Senorita!"

CHRISTIAN But Roxane—

ROXANE I know—

I said "a lover"—but you understand—

Forgive me!—If I said "I am going to meet

My husband," no one would believe me!

CHRISTIAN Yes,

But—

ROXANE What then?

DE GUICHE You must leave this place.

CYRANO At once.

ROXANE I?

LE BRET Yes—immediately.

ROXANE And why?

CHRISTIAN *(Embarrassed)* Because . . .

CYRANO *(Same)* In half an hour . . .

DE GUICHE *(Same)* Or three quarters . . .

CARBON *(Same)* Perhaps

It might be better . . .

LE BRET If you . . .

ROXANE Oh— I see!

You are going to fight. I remain here.

ALL No—no!

ROXANE He is my husband— *(Throws herself in Christian's arms)*

I will die with you!

CHRISTIAN Your eyes! . . . Why do you?—

ROXANE You know why . . .

DE GUICHE *(Desperate)* This post
Is dangerous—
ROXANE *(Turns)* How—dangerous?
CYRANO The proof
Is, we are ordered—
ROXANE *(To De Guiche)* Oh—you wish to make
A widow of me?
DE GUICHE On my word of honor—
ROXANE No matter. I am just a little mad—
I will stay. It may be amusing.
CYRANO What,
A heroine—our intellectual?
ROXANE Monsieur de Bergerac, I am your cousin!
A CADET We'll fight now! Hurrah!
ROXANE *(More and more excited)* I am safe with you—my friends!
ANOTHER *(Carried away)* The whole camp breathes of lilies!—
ROXANE And I think,
This hat would look well on the battlefield! . . .
But perhaps— *(Looks at De Guiche)*
The Count ought to leave us. Any moment
Now, there may be danger.
DE GUICHE This is too much!
I must inspect my guns. I shall return—
You may change your mind— There will yet be time—
ROXANE Never! *(De Guiche goes out)*
CHRISTIAN *(Imploring)* Roxane! . . .

ROXANE No!

FIRST CADET *(To the rest)* She stays here!

ALL *(Rushing about, elbowing each other, brushing off their clothes)* A comb!—
Soap!—Here's a hole in my— A needle!—Who
Has a ribbon?—Your mirror, quick!—My cuffs—
A razor—

ROXANE *(To Cyrano, who is still urging her)* No! I shall not stir one step!

CARBON *(Having, like the others, tightened his belt, dusted himself, brushed off his hat, smoothed out his plume and put on his lace cuffs, advances to Roxane ceremoniously)*
In that case, may I not present to you
Some of these gentlemen who are to have
The honor of dying in your presence?

ROXANE *(Bows)* Please!— *(She waits, standing, on the arm of Christian, while*

CARBON *(—presents)* Baron de Peyrescous de Colignac!

THE CADET *(Salutes)* Madame . . .

ROXANE Monsieur . . .

CARBON *(Continues)* Baron de Casterac
De Cahuzac— Vidame de Malgouyre
Estressac Lésbas d'Escarabiot—

THE VIDAME Madame . . .

CARBON Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet—
Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Saléchan
De Castel-Crabioules—

THE BARON Madame . . .

ROXANE How many
Names you all have!

THE BARON Hundreds!

CARBON *(To Roxane)* Open the hand
That holds your handkerchief.

ROXANE *(Opens her hand; the handkerchief falls)* Why? *(The whole company makes a movement toward it)*

CARBON *(Picks it up quickly)* My company
Was in want of a banner. We have now
The fairest in the army!

ROXANE *(Smiling)* Rather small—

CARBON *(Fastens the handkerchief to his lance)* Lace—and embroidered!

A CADET *(To the others)* With her smiling on me,
I could die happy, if I only had
Something in my—

CARBON *(Turns upon him)* Shame on you! Feast your eyes
And forget your—

ROXANE *(Quickly)* It must be this fresh air—
I am starving! Let me see . . .
Cold partridges,
Pastry, a little white wine—that would do.
Will some one bring that to me?

A CADET *(Aside)* Will some one!—

ANOTHER Where the devil are we to find—

ROXANE *(Overhears; sweetly)* Why, there—
In my carriage.

ALL Wha-at?

ROXANE All you have to do

Is to unpack, and carve, and serve things.

Oh,

Notice my coachman; you may recognize

An old friend.

THE CADETS *(Rush to the coach)* Ragueneau!

ROXANE *(Follows them with her eyes)* Poor fellows . . .

THE CADETS *(Acclamations)* Ah!

Ah!

CYRANO *(Kisses her hand)* Our good fairy!

RAGUENEAU *(Standing on his box, like a mountebank before a crowd)*

Gentlemen! — *(Enthusiasm)*

THE CADETS Bravo!

Bravo!

RAGUENEAU The Spaniards, basking in our smiles,

Smiled on our baskets! *(Applause)*

CYRANO *(Aside, to Christian)* Christian! —

RAGUENEAU They adored

The Fair, and missed — *(He takes from under the seat a dish, which he holds aloft)*

the Fowl! *(Applause. The dish is passed from hand to hand)*

CYRANO *(As before, to Christian)* One moment —

RAGUENEAU Venus

Charmed their eyes, while Adonis quietly *(Brandishing a ham)*

Brought home the Boar! *(Applause; the ham is seized by a score of hands outstretched)*

CYRANO *(As before)* Pst — Let me speak to you —

ROXANE *(As the Cadets return, their arms full of provisions)*

Spread them out on the ground. *(Calls)*

Christian! Come here;
Make yourself useful. *(Christian turns to her, at the moment when Cyrano was leading him aside. She arranges the food, with his aid and that of the two imperturbable footmen)*

RAGUENEAU Peacock, *aux truffes!*

FIRST CADET *(Comes down, cutting a huge slice of the ham)* Tonnerre!
We are not going to die without a gorge— *(Sees Roxane; corrects himself hastily)*
Pardon—a banquet!

RAGUENEAU *(Tossing out the cushions of the carriage)* Open these—they are full
Of ortolans! *(Tumult; laughter; the cushions are eviscerated)*

THIRD CADET Lucullus!

RAGUENEAU *(Throws out bottles of red wine)* Flasks of ruby— *(And of white)*
Flasks of topaz—

ROXANE *(Throws a tablecloth at the head of Cyrano)* Come back out of your dreams!
Unfold this cloth—

RAGUENEAU *(Takes off one of the lanterns of the carriage, and flourishes it)*
Our lamps are bonbonnières!

CYRANO *(To Christian)* I must see you before you speak with her—

RAGUENEAU *(More and more lyrical)* My whip-handle is one long sausage!

ROXANE *(Pouring wine; passing the food)* We
Being about to die, first let us dine!
Never mind the others—all for Gascoyne!
And if De Guiche comes, he is not invited! *(Going from one to another)*
Plenty of time—you need not eat so fast—
Hold your cup— *(To another)* What's the matter?

THE CADET *(Sobbing)* You are so good
To us . . .

ROXANE There, there! Red or white wine? —Some bread
For Monsieur de Carbon! —Napkins— A knife—
Pass your plate— Some of the crust? A little more—
Light or dark? —Burgundy? —

CYRANO *(Follows her with an armful of dishes, helping to serve)* Adorable!

ROXANE *(Goes to Christian)* What would you like?

CHRISTIAN Nothing.

ROXANE Oh, but you must! —
A little wine? A biscuit?

CHRISTIAN Tell me first
Why you came—

ROXANE By and by. I must take care
Of these poor boys—

LE BRET *(Who has gone up stage to pass up food to the sentry on the parapet, on the end of a lance)* De Guiche! —

CYRANO Hide everything
Quick! —Dishes, bottles, tablecloth—
Now look
Hungry again— *(To Ragueneau)*
You there! Up on your box—
—Everything out of sight? — *(In a twinkling, everything has been pushed inside the tents, hidden in their hats or under their cloaks. De Guiche enters quickly, then stops, sniffing the air. Silence)*

DE GUICHE It smells good here.

A CADET *(Humming with an air of great unconcern)* *Sing ha-ha-ha and ho-ho-ho —*

DE GUICHE *(Stares at him; he grows embarrassed)* You there —

What are you blushing for?

THE CADET Nothing — my blood

Stirs at the thought of battle.

ANOTHER *Pom . . . pom . . . pom! . . .*

DE GUICHE *(Turns upon him)* What is that?

THE CADET *(Slightly stimulated)* Only song — only little song —

DE GUICHE You appear happy!

THE CADET Oh yes — always happy

Before a fight —

DE GUICHE *(Calls to Carbon, for the purpose of giving him an order)*

Captain! I — *(Stops and looks at him)* What the devil —

You are looking happy too! —

CARBON *(Pulls a long face and hides a bottle behind his back)* No!

DE GUICHE Here — I had

One gun remaining. I have had it placed *(He points off stage)*

There — in that corner — for your men.

A CADET *(Simpering)* *So* kind! —

Charming attention!

ANOTHER *(Same business; burlesque)* Sweet solicitude! —

DE GUICHE *(Contemptuous)* I believe you are both drunk — *(Coldly)*

Being unaccustomed

To guns — take care of the recoil!

FIRST CADET *(Gesture)* Ah-h . . . Pfft!

DE GUICHE *(Goes up to him, furious)* How dare you?

FIRST CADET A Gascon's gun never recoils!

DE GUICHE *(Shakes him by the arm)* You *are* drunk—

FIRST CADET *(Superbly)* With the smell of powder!

DE GUICHE *(Turns away with a shrug)* Bah! *(To Roxane)*
Madame, have you decided?

ROXANE I stay here.

DE GUICHE You have time to escape—

ROXANE No!

DE GUICHE Very well—
Someone give me a musket!

CARBON What?

DE GUICHE *I* stay
Here also.

CYRANO *(Formally)* Sir, you show courage!

FIRST CADET A Gascon
In spite of all that lace!

ROXANE Why—

DE GUICHE Must I run
Away, and leave a woman?

SECOND CADET *(To First Cadet)* We might give him
Something to eat—what do you say? *(All the food re-appears, as if by magic)*

DE GUICHE *(His face lights up)* A feast!

THIRD CADET *Here a little, there a little—*

DE GUICHE *(Recovers his self-control; haughtily)* Do you think
I want your leavings?

CYRANO *(Saluting)* Colonel—you improve!

DE GUICHE I can fight as I am!

FIRST CADET *(Delighted)* Listen to him—

He has an accent!

DE GUICHE *(Laughs)* Have I so?

FIRST CADET A Gascon!—

A Gascon, after all! *(They all begin to dance)*

CARBON *(Who has disappeared for a moment behind the parapet, re-appears on top of it)*

I have placed my pikemen

Here. *(Indicates a row of pikes showing above the parapet)*

DE GUICHE *(Bows to Roxane)* We'll review them; will you take my arm? *(She takes his arm; they go up on the parapet. The rest uncover, and follow them up stage)*

CHRISTIAN *(Goes hurriedly to Cyrano)* Speak quickly! *(At the moment when Roxane appears on the parapet the pikes are lowered in salute, and a cheer is heard. She bows)*

THE PIKEMEN *(Off stage)* Hurrah!

CHRISTIAN What is it?

CYRANO If Roxane . . .

CHRISTIAN Well?

CYRANO Speaks about your letters . . .

CHRISTIAN Yes—I know!

CYRANO Do not make the mistake of showing . . .

CHRISTIAN What?

CYRANO Showing surprise.

CHRISTIAN Surprise—why?

CYRANO I must tell you! . . .

It is quite simple—I had forgotten it

Until just now. You have . . .

CHRISTIAN Speak quickly! —

CYRANO You

Have written oftener than you think.

CHRISTIAN Oh — have I?

CYRANO I took upon me to interpret you;

And wrote — sometimes . . . without . . .

CHRISTIAN My knowing. Well?

CYRANO Perfectly simple!

CHRISTIAN Oh yes, perfectly! —

For a month, we have been blockaded here! —

How did you send all these letters?

CYRANO Before

Daylight, I managed —

CHRISTIAN I see. That was also

Perfectly simple!

— So I wrote to her,

How many times a week? Twice? Three times? Four?

CYRANO Oftener.

CHRISTIAN Every day?

CYRANO Yes — every day . . .

Every single day . . .

CHRISTIAN *(Violently)* And that wrought you up

Into such a flame that you faced death —

CYRANO *(Sees Roxane returning)* Hush —

Not before her! *(He goes quickly into the tent. Roxane comes up to Christian)*

ROXANE Now — Christian!

CHRISTIAN *(Takes her hands)* Tell me now
Why you came here—over these ruined roads—
Why you made your way among mosstroopers
And ruffians—you—to join me here?

ROXANE Because—
Your letters . . .

CHRISTIAN Meaning?

ROXANE It was your own fault
If I ran into danger! I went mad—
Mad with you! Think what you have written me,
How many times, each one more wonderful
Than the last!

CHRISTIAN All this for a few absurd
Love-letters—

ROXANE Hush—absurd! How can you know?
I thought I loved you, ever since one night
When a voice that I never would have known
Under my window breathed your soul to me . . .
But—all this time, your letters—every one
Was like hearing your voice there in the dark,
All around me, like your arms around me . . . *(More lightly)*
At last,
I came. Anyone would! Do you suppose
The prim Penelope had stayed at home
Embroidering,—if Ulysses wrote like you?
She would have fallen like another Helen—

Tucked up those linen petticoats of hers
And followed him to Troy!

CHRISTIAN But you—

ROXANE I read them
Over and over. I grew faint reading them.
I belonged to you. Every page of them
Was like a petal fallen from your soul—
Like the light and the fire of a great love,
Sweet and strong and true—

CHRISTIAN Sweet . . . and strong . . . and true . . .
You felt that, Roxane?—

ROXANE You know how I feel! . . .

CHRISTIAN So—you came . . .

ROXANE Oh my Christian, oh my king,—
Lift me up if I fall upon my knees—
It is the heart of me that kneels to you,
And will remain forever at your feet—
You cannot lift that!—
I came here to say
'Forgive me'—(It is time to be forgiven
Now, when we may die presently)—forgive me
For being light and vain and loving you
Only because you were beautiful.

CHRISTIAN *(Astonished)* Roxane! . . .

ROXANE Afterwards I knew better. Afterwards
(I had to learn to use my wings) I loved you

For yourself too—knowing you more, and loving
More of you. And now—

CHRISTIAN Now? . . .

ROXANE It is yourself
I love now: your own self.

CHRISTIAN *(Taken aback)* Roxane!

ROXANE *(Gravely)* Be happy!—
You must have suffered; for you must have seen
How frivolous I was; and to be loved
For the mere costume, the poor casual body
You went about in—to a soul like yours,
That must have been torture! Therefore with words
You revealed your heart. Now that image of you
Which filled my eyes first—I see better now,
And I see it no more!

CHRISTIAN Oh!—

ROXANE You still doubt
Your victory?

CHRISTIAN *(Miserably)* Roxane!—

ROXANE I understand:
You cannot perfectly believe in me—
A love like this—

CHRISTIAN I want no love like this!
I want love only for—

ROXANE Only for what
Every woman sees in you? I can do
Better than that!

CHRISTIAN No—it was best before!

ROXANE You do not altogether know me . . . Dear,
There is more of me than there was—with this,
I can love more of you—more of what makes
You your own self—Truly! . . . If you were less
Lovable—

CHRISTIAN No!

ROXANE —Less charming—ugly even—
I should love you still.

CHRISTIAN You mean that?

ROXANE I do
Mean that!

CHRISTIAN Ugly? . . .

ROXANE Yes. Even then!

CHRISTIAN *(Agonized)* Oh . . . God! . . .

ROXANE Now are you happy?

CHRISTIAN *(Choking)* Yes . . .

ROXANE What is it?

CHRISTIAN *(Pushes her away gently)* Only . . .
Nothing . . . one moment . . .

ROXANE But—

CHRISTIAN *(Gesture toward The Cadets)* I am keeping you
From those poor fellows— Go and smile at them;
They are going to die!

ROXANE *(Softly)* Dear Christian!

CHRISTIAN Go— *(She goes up among the Gascons who gather round her respectfully)*
Cyrano!

CYRANO *(Comes out of the tent, armed for the battle)* What is wrong? You look—

CHRISTIAN She does not
Love me any more.

CYRANO *(Smiles)* You think not?

CHRISTIAN She loves
You.

CYRANO No!—

CHRISTIAN *(Bitterly)* She loves only my soul.

CYRANO No!

CHRISTIAN Yes—
That means you. And you love her.

CYRANO I?

CHRISTIAN I see—
I know!

CYRANO That is true . . .

CHRISTIAN More than—

CYRANO *(Quietly)* More than that.

CHRISTIAN Tell her so!

CYRANO No.

CHRISTIAN Why not?

CYRANO Why—look at me!

CHRISTIAN She would love me if I were ugly.

CYRANO *(Startled)* She—
Said that?

CHRISTIAN Yes. Now then!

CYRANO *(Half to himself)* It was good of her

To tell you that . . . *(Change of tone)*
Nonsense! Do not believe
Any such madness—
It was good of her
To tell you. . . .
Do not take her at her word!
Go on—you never will be ugly— Go!
She would never forgive me.

CHRISTIAN That is what
We shall see.

CYRANO No, no—

CHRISTIAN Let her choose between us!—
Tell her everything!

CYRANO No—you torture me—

CHRISTIAN Shall I ruin your happiness, because
I have a cursed pretty face? That seems
Too unfair!

CYRANO And am I to ruin yours
Because I happen to be born with power
To say what you—perhaps—feel?

CHRISTIAN Tell her!

CYRANO Man—
Do not try me too far!

CHRISTIAN I am tired of being
My own rival!

CYRANO Christian!—

CHRISTIAN Our secret marriage—
No witnesses—fraudulent—that can be
Annulled—

CYRANO Do not try me—

CHRISTIAN I want her love
For the poor fool I am—or not at all!
Oh, I am going through with this! I'll know,
One way or the other. Now I shall walk down
To the end of the post. Go tell her. Let her choose
One of us.

CYRANO It will be you.

CHRISTIAN God—I hope so! *(He turns and calls)*
Roxane!

CYRANO No—no—

ROXANE *(Hurries down to him)* Yes, Christian?

CHRISTIAN Cyrano
Has news for you—important. *(She turns to Cyrano. Christian goes out)*

ROXANE *(Lightly)* Oh—important?

CYRANO He is gone . . . *(To Roxane)* Nothing—only Christian thinks
You ought to know—

ROXANE I do know. He still doubts
What I told him just now. I saw that.

CYRANO *(Takes her hand)* Was it
True—what you told him just now?

ROXANE It was true!
I said that I should love him even . . .

CYRANO *(Smiling sadly)* The word
Comes hard—before me?

ROXANE Even if he were . . .

CYRANO Say it—
I shall not be hurt!—Ugly?

ROXANE Even then
I should love him. *(A few shots, off stage, in the direction in which Christian disappeared)*
Hark! The guns—

CYRANO Hideous?

ROXANE Hideous.

CYRANO Disfigured?

ROXANE Or disfigured.

CYRANO Even
Grotesque?

ROXANE How could he ever be grotesque—
Ever—to me!

CYRANO But you could love him so,
As much as?—

ROXANE Yes—and more!

CYRANO *(Aside, excitedly)* It is true!—true!—
Perhaps—God! This is too much happiness . . . *(To Roxane)*
I—Roxane—listen—

LE BRET *(Enters quickly; calls to Cyrano in a low tone)* Cyrano—

CYRANO *(Turns)* Yes?

LE BRET Hush! . . . *(Whispers a few words to him)*

CYRANO *(Lets fall Roxane's hand)* Ah!

ROXANE What is it?

CYRANO *(Half stunned, and aside)* All gone . . .

ROXANE *(More shots)* What is it? Oh,
They are fighting! — *(She goes up to look off stage)*

CYRANO All gone. I cannot ever
Tell her, now . . . ever . . .

ROXANE *(Starts to rush away)* What has happened?

CYRANO *(Restrains her)* Nothing. *(Several Cadets enter. They conceal something which they are carrying, and form a group so as to prevent Roxane from seeing their burden)*

ROXANE These men —

CYRANO Come away . . . *(He leads her away from the group)*

ROXANE You were telling me
Something —

CYRANO Oh, that? Nothing. . . . *(Gravely)* I swear to you
That the spirit of Christian — that his soul
Was — *(Corrects himself quickly)* That his soul is no less great —

ROXANE *(Catches at the word)* *Was?* *(Crying out)*
Oh! — *(She rushes among the men, and scatters them)*

CYRANO All gone . . .

ROXANE *(Sees Christian lying upon his cloak)* Christian!

LE BRET *(To Cyrano)* At the first volley. *(Roxane throws herself upon the body of Christian. Shots; at first scattered, then increasing. Drums. Voices shouting)*

CARBON *(Sword in hand)* Here
They come! — Ready! — *(Followed by the Cadets, he climbs over the parapet and disappears)*

ROXANE Christian!

CARBON *(Off stage)* Come on, there, You!

ROXANE Christian!

CARBON *Fall in!*

ROXANE Christian!

CARBON *Measure your fuse! (Ragueneau hurries up, carrying a helmet full of water)*

CHRISTIAN *(Faintly)* Roxane! . . .

CYRANO *(Low and quick, in Christian's ear, while Roxane is dipping into the water a strip of linen torn from her dress)* I have told her; she loves you. *(Christian closes his eyes)*

ROXANE *(Turns to Christian)* Yes,
My darling?

CARBON *Draw your ramrods!*

ROXANE *(To Cyrano)* He is not dead? . . .

CARBON *Open your charges!*

ROXANE I can feel his cheek
Growing cold against mine—

CARBON *Take aim!*

ROXANE A letter—
Over his heart— *(She opens it)* For me.

CYRANO *(Aside)* My letter . . .

CARBON *Fire! (Musketry, cries and groans. Din of battle)*

CYRANO *(Trying to withdraw his hand, which Roxane, still upon her knees, is holding)*
But Roxane—they are fighting—

ROXANE Wait a little . . .
He is dead. No one else knew him but you . . . *(She weeps quietly)*

Was he not a great lover, a great man,
A hero?

CYRANO *(Standing, bareheaded)* Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE A poet, unknown,
Adorable?

CYRANO Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE A fine mind?

CYRANO Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE A heart deeper than we knew—
A soul magnificently tender?

CYRANO *(Firmly)* Yes,
Roxane!

ROXANE *(Sinks down upon the breast of Christian)* He is dead now . . .

CYRANO *(Aside; draws his sword)* Why, so am I—
For I am dead, and my love mourns for me
And does not know . . . *(Trumpets in distance)*

DE GUICHE *(Appears on the parapet, disheveled, wounded on the forehead, shouting)*
The signal—hark—the trumpets!
The army has returned— Hold them now!—Hold them!
The army!—

ROXANE On his letter—blood . . . and tears.

A VOICE *(Off stage)* Surrender!

THE CADETS No!

RAGUENEAU This place is dangerous!—

CYRANO *(To De Guiche)* Take her away—I am going—

ROXANE *(Kisses the letter; faintly)* His blood . . . his tears . . .

RAGUENEAU *(Leaps down from the coach and runs to her)* She has fainted—

DE GUICHE *(On the parapet; savagely, to The Cadets)* Hold them!

VOICE OFF STAGE Lay down your arms!

VOICES No! No!

CYRANO *(To De Guiche)* Sir, you have proved yourself— Take care of her.

DE GUICHE *(Hurries to Roxane and takes her up in his arms)*

As you will—we can win, if you hold on

A little longer—

CYRANO Good! *(Calls out to Roxane, as she is carried away, fainting, by De Guiche and Ragueneau)*

Adieu, Roxane! *(Tumult, outcries. Several Cadets come back wounded and fall on the stage. Cyrano, rushing to the fight, is stopped on the crest of the parapet by Carbon, covered with blood)*

CARBON We are breaking—I am twice wounded—

CYRANO *(Shouts to the Gascons)* *Hardi!*

Reculez pas, Drollos! *(To Carbon, holding him up)*

So—never fear!

I have two deaths to avenge now—Christian's

And my own! *(They come down. Cyrano takes from him the lance with Roxane's handkerchief still fastened to it)*

Float, little banner, with her name! *(He plants it on the parapet; then shouts to The Cadets)*

Toumbé dessus! Escrasas lous! *(To the fifer)*

Your fife!

Music! *(Fife plays. The wounded drag themselves to their feet. Other Cadets scramble over the parapet and group themselves around Cyrano and his tiny flag.*

The coach is filled and covered with men, bristling with muskets, transformed into a redoubt)

A CADET *(Reels backward over the wall, still fighting. Shouts)*

They are climbing over!— *(And falls dead)*

CYRANO Very good—

Let them come!— A salute now— *(The parapet is crowned for an instant with a rank of enemies. The imperial banner of Spain is raised aloft)*

Fire! *(General volley)*

VOICE *(Among the ranks of the enemy)* Fire! *(Murderous counter-fire; The Cadets fall on every side)*

A SPANISH OFFICER *(Uncovers)* Who are these men who are so fond of death?

CYRANO *(Erect amid the hail of bullets, declaims)*

The Cadets of Gascoyne, the defenders
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux—
Free fighters, free lovers, free spenders— (He rushes forward, followed by a few survivors)
The Cadets of Gascoyne . . . (The rest is lost in the din of battle)

(CURTAIN)

THE FIFTH ACT

CYRANO'S GAZETTE

FIFTEEN *years later, in* 1655. *The Park of the Convent occupied by the Ladies of the Cross, at Paris.*

Magnificent foliage. To the Left, the House upon a broad Terrace at the head of a flight of steps, with several Doors opening upon the Terrace. In the centre of the scene an enormous Tree alone in the centre of a little open space. Toward the Right, in the foreground, among Boxwood Bushes, a semicircular Bench of stone.

All the way across the Background of the scene, an Avenue overarched by the chestnut trees, leading to the door of a Chapel on the Right, just visible among the branches of the trees. Beyond the double curtain of the trees, we catch a glimpse of bright lawns and shaded walks, masses of shrubbery; the perspective of the Park; the sky.

A little side door of the Chapel opens upon a Colon-

nade, garlanded with Autumnal vines, and disappearing on the Right behind the box-trees.

It is late October. Above the still living green of the turf all the foliage is red and yellow and brown. The evergreen masses of Box and Yew stand out darkly against this Autumnal coloring. A heap of dead leaves under every tree. The leaves are falling everywhere. They rustle underfoot along the walks; the Terrace and the Bench are half covered with them.

Before the Bench on the Right, on the side toward the Tree, is placed a tall embroidery frame and beside it a little Chair. Baskets filled with skeins of many-colored silks and balls of wool. Tapestry unfinished on the Frame.

At the CURTAIN RISE *the nuns are coming and going across the Park; several of them are seated on the Bench around Mother Marguerite de Jésus. The leaves are falling.*

SISTER MARTHE *(To Mother Marguerite)* Sister Claire has been looking in the glass
At her new cap; twice!

MOTHER MARGUERITE *(To Sister Claire)* It is very plain;
Very.

SISTER CLAIRE And Sister Marthe stole a plum
Out of the tart this morning!

MOTHER MARGUERITE *(To Sister Marthe)* That was wrong;
Very wrong.

SISTER CLAIRE Oh, but such a little look!

SISTER MARTHE Such a little plum!

MOTHER MARGUERITE *(Severely)* I shall tell Monsieur
De Cyrano, this evening.

SISTER CLAIRE No! Oh no!—
He will make fun of us.

SISTER MARTHE He will say nuns
Are so gay!
SISTER CLAIRE And so greedy!
MOTHER MARGUERITE *(Smiling)* And so good . . .
SISTER CLAIRE It must be ten years, Mother Marguerite,
That he has come here every Saturday,
Is it not?
MOTHER MARGUERITE More than ten years; ever since
His cousin came to live among us here—
Her worldly weeds among our linen veils,
Her widowhood and our virginity—
Like a black dove among white doves.
SISTER MARTHE No one
Else ever turns that happy sorrow of hers
Into a smile.
ALL THE NUNS He is such fun!—He makes us
Almost laugh!—And he teases everyone—
And pleases everyone— And we all love him—
And he likes our cake, too—
SISTER MARTHE I am afraid
He is not a good Catholic.
SISTER CLAIRE Some day
We shall convert him.
THE NUNS Yes—yes!
MOTHER MARGUERITE Let him be;
I forbid you to worry him. Perhaps

He might stop coming here.

SISTER MARTHE But . . . God?

MOTHER MARGUERITE You need not
Be afraid. God knows all about him.

SISTER MARTHE Yes . . .
But every Saturday he says to me,
Just as if he were proud of it: "Well, Sister,
I ate meat yesterday!"

MOTHER MARGUERITE He tells you so?
The last time he said that, he had not eaten
Anything, for two days.

SISTER MARTHE Mother! —

MOTHER MARGUERITE He is poor;
Very poor.

SISTER MARTHE Who said so?

MOTHER MARGUERITE Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHE Why does not someone help him?

MOTHER MARGUERITE He would be
Angry; very angry . . . *(Between the trees up stage, Roxane appears, all in black, with a widow's cap and long veils. De Guiche, magnificently grown old, walks beside her. They move slowly. Mother Marguerite rises)* Let us go in —
Madame Magdeleine has a visitor.

SISTER MARTHE *(To Sister Claire)* The Duc de Grammont, is it not? The Marshal?

SISTER CLAIRE *(Looks toward De Guiche)* I think so — yes.

SISTER MARTHE He has not been to see her
For months —

THE NUNS He is busy—the Court!—The Camp!—

SISTER CLAIRE The world! . . . *(They go out. De Guiche and Roxane come down in silence, and stop near the embroidery frame. Pause)*

DE GUICHE And you remain here, wasting all that gold—
For ever in mourning?

ROXANE For ever.

DE GUICHE And still faithful?

ROXANE And still faithful . . .

DE GUICHE *(After a pause)* Have you forgiven me?

ROXANE *(Simply, looking up at the cross of the Convent)* I am here. *(Another pause)*

DE GUICHE Was Christian . . . all that?

ROXANE If you knew him.

DE GUICHE Ah? We were not precisely . . . intimate . . .
And his last letter—always at your heart?

ROXANE It hangs here, like a holy reliquary.

DE GUICHE Dead—and you love him still!

ROXANE Sometimes I think
He has not altogether died; our hearts
Meet, and his love flows all around me, living.

DE GUICHE *(After another pause)* You see Cyrano often?

ROXANE Every week.
My old friend takes the place of my Gazette,
Brings me all the news. Every Saturday,
Under that tree where you are now, his chair
Stands, if the day be fine. I wait for him,
Embroidering; the hour strikes; then I hear,

(I need not turn to look!) at the last stroke,
His cane tapping the steps. He laughs at me
For my eternal needlework. He tells
The story of the past week— *(Le Bret appears on the steps)*
There's Le Bret!— *(Le Bret approaches)*
How is it with our friend?

LE BRET Badly.

DE GUICHE Indeed?

ROXANE *(To De Guiche)* Oh, he exaggerates!

LE BRET Just as I said—
Loneliness, misery—I told him so!—
His satires make a host of enemies—
He attacks the false nobles, the false saints,
The false heroes, the false artists—in short,
Everyone!

ROXANE But they fear that sword of his—
No one dare touch him!

DE GUICHE *(With a shrug)* H'm—that may be so.

LE BRET It is not violence I fear for him,
But solitude—poverty—old gray December,
Stealing on wolf's feet, with a wolf's green eyes,
Into his darkening room. Those bravoes yet
May strike our Swordsman down! Every day now,
He draws his belt up one hole; his poor nose
Looks like old ivory; he has one coat
Left—his old black serge.

DE GUICHE That is nothing strange
In this world! No, you need not pity him
Overmuch.

LE BRET *(With a bitter smile)* My lord Marshal! . . .

DE GUICHE I say, do not
Pity him overmuch. He lives his life,
His own life, his own way—thought, word, and deed
Free!

LE BRET *(As before)* My lord Duke! . . .

DE GUICHE *(Haughtily)* Yes, I know—I have all;
He has nothing. Nevertheless, to-day
I should be proud to shake his hand . . . *(Saluting Roxane)* Adieu.

ROXANE I will go with you. *(De Guiche salutes Le Bret, and turns with Roxane toward the steps)*

DE GUICHE *(Pauses on the steps, as she climbs)* Yes— I envy him
Now and then . . .
Do you know, when a man wins
Everything in this world, when he succeeds
Too much—he feels, having done nothing wrong
Especially, Heaven knows!—he feels somehow
A thousand small displeasures with himself,
Whose whole sum is not quite Remorse, but rather
A sort of vague disgust . . . The ducal robes
Mounting up, step by step, to pride and power,
Somewhere among their folds draw after them
A rustle of dry illusions, vain regrets,

As your veil, up the stairs here, draws along
The whisper of dead leaves.

ROXANE *(Ironical)* The sentiment
Does you honor.

DE GUICHE Oh, yes . . . *(Pausing suddenly)*
Monsieur Le Bret! — *(To Roxane)*
You pardon us? — *(He goes to Le Bret, and speaks in a low tone)*
One moment — It is true
That no one dares attack your friend. Some people
Dislike him, none the less. The other day
At Court, such a one said to me: "This man
Cyrano may die — accidentally."

LE BRET *(Coldly)* Thank you.

DE GUICHE You may thank me. Keep him at home
All you can. Tell him to be careful.

LE BRET *(Shaking his hands to heaven)* Careful! —
He is coming here. I'll warn him — yes, but! . . .

ROXANE *(Still on the steps, to a Nun who approaches her)* Here
I am — what is it?

THE NUN Madame, Ragueneau
Wishes to see you.

ROXANE Bring him here. *(To Le Bret and De Guiche)*
He comes
For sympathy — having been first of all
A Poet, he became since then, in turn,
A Singer —

LE BRET Bath-house keeper—

ROXANE Sacristan—

LE BRET Actor—

ROXANE Hairdresser—

LE BRET Music-master—

ROXANE Now,

To-day—

RAGUENEAU *(Enters hurriedly)* Madame!— *(He sees Le Bret)* Monsieur!—

ROXANE *(Smiling)* First tell your troubles

To Le Bret for a moment.

RAGUENEAU But Madame— *(She goes out, with De Guiche, not hearing him. Ragueneau comes to Le Bret)*

After all, I had rather— You are here—
She need not know so soon— I went to see him
Just now— Our friend— As I came near his door,
I saw him coming out. I hurried on
To join him. At the corner of the street,
As he passed— Could it be an accident?—
I wonder!—At the window overhead,
A lackey with a heavy log of wood
Let it fall—

LE BRET Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU I ran to him—

LE BRET God! The cowards!

RAGUENEAU I found him lying there—

A great hole in his head—

LE BRET Is he alive?

RAGUENEAU Alive—yes. But . . . I had to carry him
Up to his room—Dieu! Have you seen his room?—

LE BRET Is he suffering?

RAGUENEAU No; unconscious.

LE BRET Did you
Call a doctor?

RAGUENEAU One came—for charity.

LE BRET Poor Cyrano!—We must not tell Roxane
All at once . . . Did the doctor say?—

RAGUENEAU He said
Fever, and lesions of the— I forget
Those long names— Ah, if you had seen him there,
His head all white bandages!—Let us go
Quickly—there is no one to care for him—
All alone— If he tries to raise his head,
He may die!

LE BRET *(Draws him away to the Right)* This way— It is shorter—through
The Chapel—

ROXANE *(Appears on the stairway, and calls to Le Bret as he is going out by the colonnade which leads to the small door of the Chapel)* Monsieur Le Bret!— *(Le Bret and Ragueneau rush off without hearing)*
Running away
When I call to him? Poor dear Ragueneau
Must have been very tragic! *(She comes slowly down the stair, toward the tree)*

What a day! . . .
Something in these bright Autumn afternoons
Happy and yet regretful—an old sorrow
Smiling . . . as though poor little April dried
Her tears long ago—and remembered . . . *(She sits down at her work. Two Nuns come out of the house carrying a great chair and set it under the tree)*
Ah—
The old chair, for my old friend!—

SISTER MARTHE The best one
In our best parlor!—

ROXANE Thank you, Sister— *(The Nuns withdraw)*
There— *(She begins embroidering. The clock strikes)*
The hour!—He will be coming now—my silks—
All done striking? He never was so late
Before! The sister at the door—my thimble . . .
Here it is—she must be exhorting him
To repent all his sins . . . *(A pause)*
He ought to be
Converted, by this time— Another leaf— *(A dead leaf falls on her work; she brushes it away)*
Certainly nothing could—my scissors—ever
Keep him away—

A NUN *(Appears on the steps)* Monsieur de Bergerac.

ROXANE *(Without turning)* What was I saying? . . . Hard, sometimes, to match
These faded colors! . . . *(While she goes on working, Cyrano appears at the top of the steps, very pale, his hat drawn over his eyes. The Nun who has brought him in goes*

away. He begins to descend the steps leaning on his cane, and holding himself on his feet only by an evident effort. Roxane turns to him, with a tone of friendly banter)

After fourteen years,

Late—for the first time!

CYRANO *(Reaches the chair, and sinks into it; his gay tone contrasting with his tortured face)*

Yes, yes—maddening!

I was detained by—

ROXANE Well?

CYRANO A visitor,

Most unexpected.

ROXANE *(Carelessly, still sewing)* Was your visitor

Tiresome?

CYRANO Why, hardly that—inopportune,

Let us say—an old friend of mine—at least

A very old acquaintance.

ROXANE Did you tell him

To go away?

CYRANO For the time being, yes.

I said: "Excuse me—this is Saturday—

I have a previous engagement, one

I cannot miss, even for you— Come back

An hour from now."

ROXANE Your friend will have to wait;

I shall not let you go till dark.

CYRANO *(Very gently)* Perhaps

A little before dark, I must go . . . *(He leans back in the chair, and closes his eyes.*

Sister Marthe crosses above the stairway. Roxane sees her, motions her to wait, then turns to Cyrano)

ROXANE Look—

Somebody waiting to be teased.

CYRANO *(Quickly, opens his eyes)* Of course! *(In a big, comic voice)*

Sister, approach! *(Sister Marthe glides toward him)*

Beautiful downcast eyes!—

So shy—

SISTER MARTHE *(Looks up, smiling)* You— *(She sees his face)* Oh!—

CYRANO *(Indicates Roxane)* Sh!—Careful! *(Resumes his burlesque tone)*

Yesterday,

I ate meat again!

SISTER MARTHE Yes, I know. *(Aside)*

That is why

He looks so pale . . . *(To him: low and quickly)*

In the refectory,

Before you go—come to me there—

I'll make you

A great bowl of hot soup—will you come?

CYRANO *(Boisterously)* Ah—

Will I come!

SISTER MARTHE You are quite reasonable

To-day!

ROXANE Has she converted you?

SISTER MARTHE Oh, no—

Not for the world!—

CYRANO Why, now I think of it,
That is so— You, bursting with holiness,
And yet you never preach! Astonishing
I call it . . . *(With burlesque ferocity)*
Ah—now I'll astonish you—
I am going to— *(With the air of seeking for a good joke and finding it)*
—let you pray for me
To-night, at vespers!

ROXANE Aha!

CYRANO Look at her—
Absolutely struck dumb!

SISTER MARTHE *(Gently)* I did not wait
For you to say I might. *(She goes out)*

CYRANO *(Returns to Roxane, who is bending over her work)* Now, may the devil
Admire me, if I ever hope to see
The end of that embroidery!

ROXANE *(Smiling)* I thought
It was time you said that. *(A breath of wind causes a few leaves to fall)*

CYRANO The leaves—

ROXANE *(Raises her head and looks away through the trees)* What color—
Perfect Venetian red! Look at them fall.

CYRANO Yes—they know how to die. A little way
From the branch to the earth, a little fear
Of mingling with the common dust—and yet
They go down gracefully—a fall that seems
Like flying!

ROXANE Melancholy—you?

CYRANO Why, no,

Roxane!

ROXANE Then let the leaves fall. Tell me now

The Court news—my gazette!

CYRANO Let me see—

ROXANE Ah!

CYRANO *(More and more pale, struggling against pain)*

Saturday, the nineteenth: The King fell ill,
After eight helpings of grape marmalade.
His malady was brought before the court,
Found guilty of high treason; whereupon
His Majesty revived. The royal pulse
Is now normal. *Sunday, the twentieth:*
The Queen gave a grand ball, at which they burned
Seven hundred and sixty-three wax candles. *Note:*
They say our troops have been victorious
In Austria. *Later:* Three sorcerers
Have been hung. *Special post:* The little dog
Of Madame d'Athis was obliged to take
Four pills before—

ROXANE Monsieur de Bergerac,

Will you kindly be quiet!

CYRANO *Monday* . . . nothing.

Lygdamire has a new lover.

ROXANE Oh!

CYRANO *(His face more and more altered)* *Tuesday,*
The twenty-second: All the court has gone
To Fontainebleau. *Wednesday:* The Comte de Fiesque
Spoke to Madame de Montglat; she said No.
Thursday: Mancini was the Queen of France
Or—very nearly! *Friday:* La Montglat
Said Yes. *Saturday, twenty-sixth. . . . (His eyes close; his head sinks back; silence)*

ROXANE *(Surprised at not hearing any more, turns, looks at him, and rises, frightened)*
He has fainted— *(She runs to him, crying out)*
Cyrano!

CYRANO *(Opens his eyes)* What . . . What is it? . . . *(He sees Roxane leaning over him, and quickly pulls his hat down over his head and leans back away from her in the chair)* No—oh no—
It is nothing—truly!

ROXANE But—

CYRANO My old wound—
At Arras—sometimes—you know. . . .

ROXANE My poor friend!

CYRANO Oh it is nothing; it will soon be gone. . . . *(Forcing a smile)*
There! It is gone!

ROXANE *(Standing close to him)* We all have our old wounds—
I have mine—here . . . *(Her hand at her breast)*
under this faded scrap
Of writing. . . . It is hard to read now—all
But the blood—and the tears. . . . *(Twilight begins to fall)*

CYRANO His letter! . . . Did you
Not promise me that some day . . . that some day
You would let me read it?

ROXANE His letter?—You . . .
You wish—

CYRANO I do wish it—to-day.

ROXANE *(Gives him the little silken bag from around her neck)* Here. . . .

CYRANO May I . . . open it?

ROXANE Open it, and read. *(She goes back to her work, folds it again, rearranges her silks)*

CYRANO *(Unfolds the letter; reads)* "Farewell Roxane, because to-day I die—"

ROXANE *(Looks up, surprised)* Aloud?

CYRANO *(Reads)* "I know that it will be to-day,
My own dearly beloved—and my heart
Still so heavy with love I have not told,
And I die without telling you! No more
Shall my eyes drink the sight of you like wine,
Never more, with a look that is a kiss,
Follow the sweet grace of you—"

ROXANE How you read it—
His letter!

CYRANO *(Continues)* "I remember now the way
You have, of pushing back a lock of hair
With one hand, from your forehead—and my heart
Cries out—"

ROXANE His letter . . . and you read it so . . . *(The darkness increases imperceptibly)*

CYRANO "Cries out and keeps crying: 'Farewell, my dear,
My dearest—'"

ROXANE In a voice. . . .

CYRANO "—My own heart's own,
My own treasure—"

ROXANE *(Dreamily)* In such a voice. . . .

CYRANO —"My love—"

ROXANE —As I remember hearing . . . *(She trembles)*
—long ago. . . . *(She comes near him, softly, without his seeing her; passes the chair, leans over silently, looking at the letter. The darkness increases)*

CYRANO "—I am never away from you. Even now,
I shall not leave you. In another world,
I shall be still that one who loves you, loves you
Beyond measure, beyond—"

ROXANE *(Lays her hand on his shoulder)* How can you read
Now? It is dark. . . . *(He starts, turns, and sees her there close to him. A little movement of surprise, almost of fear; then he bows his head. A long pause; then in the twilight now completely fallen, she says very softly, clasping her hands)*
And all these fourteen years,
He has been the old friend, who came to me
To be amusing.

CYRANO Roxane!—

ROXANE It was you.

CYRANO No, no, Roxane, no!

ROXANE And I might have known,
Every time that I heard you speak my name! . . .

CYRANO No— It was not I—

ROXANE It was . . . you!

CYRANO I swear—

ROXANE I understand everything now: The letters—
That was you . . .

CYRANO No!

ROXANE And the dear, foolish words—
That was you. . . .

CYRANO No!

ROXANE And the voice . . . in the dark. . . .
That was . . . you!

CYRANO On my honor—

ROXANE And . . . the Soul!—
That was all you.

CYRANO I never loved you—

ROXANE Yes,
You loved me.

CYRANO *(Desperately)* No— He loved you—

ROXANE Even now,
You love me!

CYRANO *(His voice weakens)* No!

ROXANE *(Smiling)* And why . . . so great a *No?*

CYRANO No, no, my own dear love, I love you not! . . . *(Pause)*

ROXANE How many things have died . . . and are new-born! . . .
Why were you silent for so many years,
All the while, every night and every day,

He gave me nothing—you knew that— You knew
Here, in this letter lying on my breast,
Your tears— You knew they were your tears—

CYRANO *(Holds the letter out to her)* The blood
Was his.

ROXANE Why do you break that silence now,
To-day?

CYRANO Why? Oh, because— *(Le Bret and Ragueneau enter, running)*

LE BRET What recklessness—
I knew it! He is here!

CYRANO *(Smiling, and trying to rise)* Well? Here I am!

RAGUENEAU He has killed himself, Madame, coming here!

ROXANE He— Oh, God. . . . And that faintness . . . was that?—

CYRANO No,
Nothing! I did not finish my Gazette—
Saturday, twenty-sixth: An hour or so
Before dinner, Monsieur de Bergerac
Died, foully murdered. *(He uncovers his head, and shows it swathed in bandages)*

ROXANE Oh, what does he mean?—
Cyrano!—What have they done to you?—

CYRANO "Struck down
By the sword of a hero, let me fall—
Steel in my heart, and laughter on my lips!"
Yes, I said that once. How Fate loves a jest!—
Behold me ambushed—taken in the rear—
My battlefield a gutter—my noble foe

A lackey, with a log of wood! . . .
It seems
Too logical— I have missed everything,
Even my death!

RAGUENEAU *(Breaks down)* Ah, monsieur!—

CYRANO Ragueneau,
Stop blubbering! *(Takes his hand)*
What are you writing nowadays,
Old poet?

RAGUENEAU *(Through his tears)* I am not a poet now;
I snuff the—light the candles—for Molière!

CYRANO Oh—Molière!

RAGUENEAU Yes, but I am leaving him
To-morrow. Yesterday they played *Scapin*—
He has stolen your scene—

LE BRET The whole scene—word for word!

RAGUENEAU Yes: "What the devil was he doing there"—
That one!

LE BRET *(Furious)* And Molière stole it all from you—
Bodily!—

CYRANO Bah— He showed good taste. . . . *(To Ragueneau)* The Scene
Went well? . . .

RAGUENEAU Ah, monsieur, they laughed—and laughed—
How they did laugh!

CYRANO Yes—that has been my life. . . .
Do you remember that night Christian spoke

Under your window? It was always so!
While I stood in the darkness underneath,
Others climbed up to win the applause—the kiss!—
Well—that seems only justice— I still say,
Even now, on the threshold of my tomb—
"Molière has genius—Christian had good looks—" *(The chapel bell is ringing. Along the avenue of trees above the stairway, the Nuns pass in procession to their prayers)*
They are going to pray now; there is the bell.

ROXANE *(Raises herself and calls to them)* Sister!—Sister!—

CYRANO *(Holding on to her hand)* No,—do not go away—
I may not still be here when you return. . . . *(The Nuns have gone into the chapel. The organ begins to play)*
A little harmony is all I need—
Listen. . . .

ROXANE You shall not die! I love you!—

CYRANO No—
That is not in the story! You remember
When Beauty said "I love you" to the Beast
That was a fairy prince, his ugliness
Changed and dissolved, like magic. . . . But you see
I am still the same.

ROXANE And I—I have done
This to you! All my fault—mine!

CYRANO You? Why no,
On the contrary! I had never known

Womanhood and its sweetness but for you.
My mother did not love to look at me—
I never had a sister— Later on,
I feared the mistress with a mockery
Behind her smile. But you—because of you
I have had one friend not quite all a friend—
Across my life, one whispering silken gown! . . .

LE BRET *(Points to the rising moon which begins to shine down between the trees)*
Your other friend is looking at you.

CYRANO *(Smiling at the moon)* I see. . . .

ROXANE I never loved but one man in my life,
And I have lost him—twice. . . .

CYRANO Le Bret— I shall be up there presently
In the moon—without having to invent
Any flying machines!

ROXANE What are you saying? . . .

CYRANO The moon—yes, that would be the place for me—
My kind of paradise! I shall find there
Those other souls who should be friends of mine—
Socrates—Galileo—

LE BRET *(Revolting)* No! No! No!
It is too idiotic—too unfair—
Such a friend—such a poet—such a man
To die so—to die so!—

CYRANO *(Affectionately)* There goes Le Bret,
Growling!

LE BRET *(Breaks down)* My friend! —

CYRANO *(Half raises himself, his eye wanders)* *The Cadets of Gascoyne,*
The Defenders. . . . The elementary mass —
Ah — there's the point! Now, then . . .

LE BRET Delirious —
And all that learning —

CYRANO On the other hand,
We have Copernicus —

ROXANE Oh!

CYRANO *(More and more delirious)* "Very well,
But what the devil was he doing there? —
What the devil was he doing there, up there?" . . . *(He declaims)*
Philosopher and scientist,
Poet, musician, duellist —
He flew high, and fell back again!
A pretty wit — whose like we lack —
A lover . . . not like other men. . . .
Here lies Hercule-Savinien
De Cyrano de Bergerac —
Who was all things — and all in vain!
Well, I must go — pardon — I cannot stay!
My moonbeam comes to carry me away. . . . *(He falls back into the chair, half fainting. The sobbing of Roxane recalls him to reality. Gradually his mind comes back to him. He looks at her, stroking the veil that hides her hair)*
I would not have you mourn any the less
That good, brave, noble Christian; but perhaps —

I ask you only this—when the great cold
Gathers around my bones, that you may give
A double meaning to your widow's weeds
And the tears you let fall for him may be
For a little—my tears. . . .

ROXANE *(Sobbing)* Oh, my love! . . .

CYRANO *(Suddenly shaken as with a fever fit, he raises himself erect and pushes her away)*
—Not here!—
Not lying down! . . . *(They spring forward to help him; he motions them back)*
Let no one help me—no one!—
Only the tree. . . . *(He sets his back against the trunk. Pause)*
It is coming . . . I feel
Already shod with marble . . . gloved with lead . . . *(Joyously)*
Let the old fellow come now! He shall find me
On my feet—sword in hand— *(Draws his sword)*

LE BRET Cyrano!—

ROXANE *(Half fainting)* Oh,
Cyrano!

CYRANO I can see him there—he grins—
He is looking at my nose—that skeleton
—What's that you say? Hopeless?—Why, very well!—
But a man does not fight merely to win!
No—no—better to know one fights in vain! . . .
You there— Who are you? A hundred against one—
I know them now, my ancient enemies— *(He lunges at the empty air)*

Falsehood! . . . There! There! Prejudice— Compromise—
Cowardice— *(Thrusting)*
What's that? No! Surrender? No!
Never—never! . . .
Ah, you too, Vanity!
I knew you would overthrow me in the end—
No! I fight on! I fight on! I fight on! *(He swings the blade in great circles, then pauses, gasping. When he speaks again, it is in another tone)*
Yes, all my laurels you have riven away
And all my roses; yet in spite of you,
There is one crown I bear away with me,
And to-night, when I enter before God,
My salute shall sweep all the stars away
From the blue threshold! One thing without stain,
Unspotted from the world, in spite of doom
Mine own!— *(He springs forward, his sword aloft)*
And that is . . . *(The sword escapes from his hand; he totters, and falls into the arms of Le Bret and Ragueneau)*

ROXANE *(Bends over him and kisses him on the forehead)* —That is . . .

CYRANO *(Opens his eyes and smiles up at her)* My white plume. . . .

(CURTAIN)

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